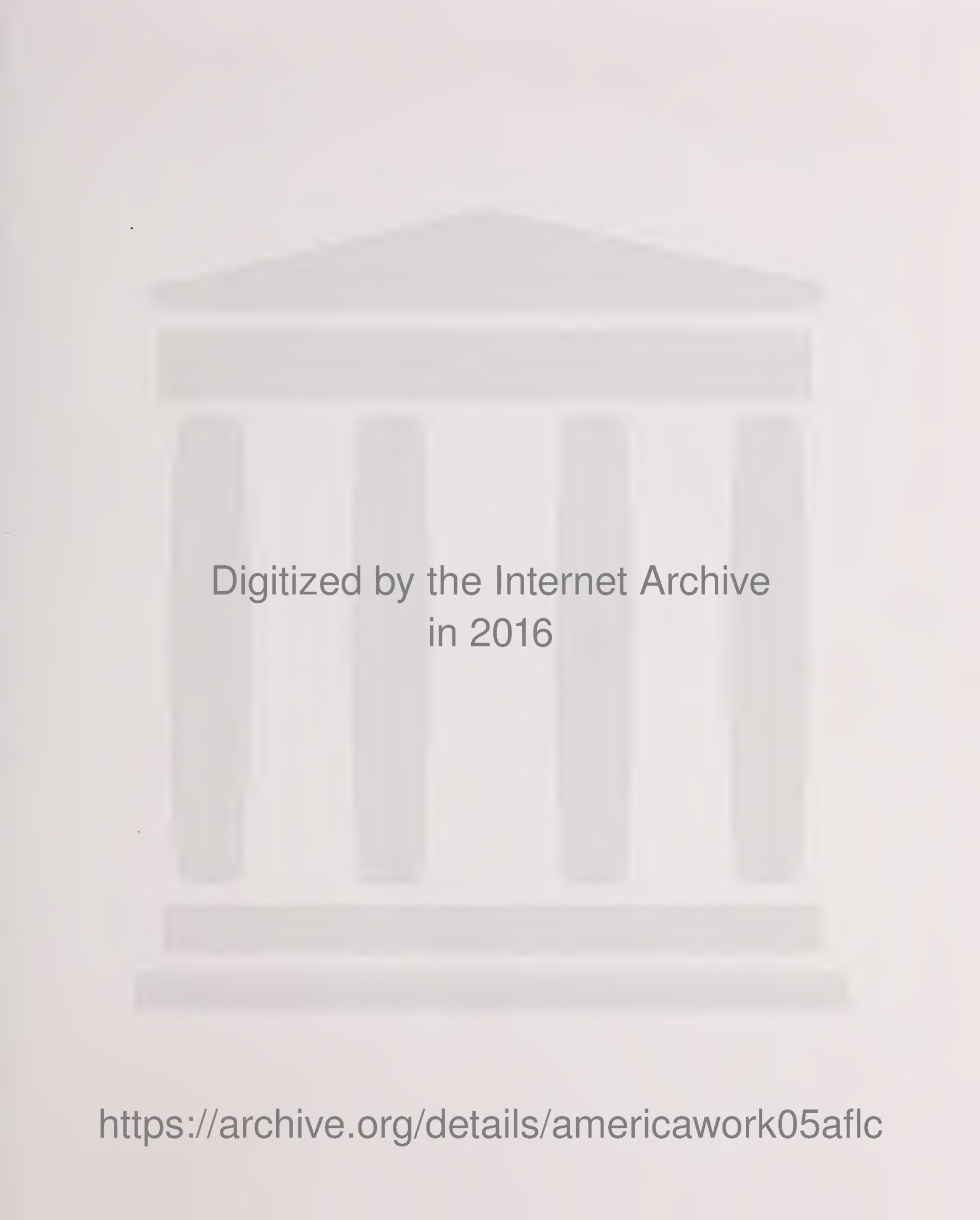


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# 100

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JANUARY 2000

# America @work

# Years of Struggle AND Success



# The Story of AMERICA

THE STORY OF AMERICA IS THE STORY OF ITS WORKING FAMILIES.

This special issue of *America@work* tells that story in a photographic essay about the past 100 years. What has the century taught us that will help us make America be America again, as Langston Hughes so eloquently put it, for working families?

We have to build strength that endures through change. Our relationships with capital and government change with business cycles and leadership turnovers. We can't allow external conditions to make us complacent or discourage us from pursuing goals that seem beyond our reach at the moment.

Improving lives for working families always requires struggle. Working people and their unions have never made gains they didn't fight and work hard for. Our history is one of struggle, and our future likely will be as well. Not struggle for its own sake, but struggle because good jobs and secure families in strong communities are worth it.

We must excel at fighting for what we believe in as well as fighting against attacks. Fending off anti-union employers, legislation and politicians allows us to hold our ground. But we have to take the offen-



JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

sive to gain new ground. And we have to keep setting our sights higher. We won the 10-hour day, then the eight-hour day. We organized a plant, then organized the industry. We won voting rights for women and people of color, then laws barring workplace discrimination. Every victory today can lead to a bigger gain tomorrow.

America would not be what it is today without us. In addition to building

and staffing her schools and hospitals, factories and farms, America's working people have built her moral foundations. Our voice on the job, in our communities, in government and in the economy has made this a more democratic country and one that is far less tolerant of classism, racism and other "isms."

We are the voice of working families, but we are not alone. The union movement created America's middle class. No other

group speaks exclusively for working families. But we are most effective when we work with allies in pursuit of social and economic justice. In the company of religious, civil and human rights advocates and other friends, we bring working family values closer to reality.

The story of the world's future will be the story of its working families working together. Over the past 100 years, our movement has been learning to look through race, gender and other differences to see the bonds among all of America's working people. Now our challenge includes looking across national borders and recognizing how closely we are linked to our brothers and sisters in developing as well as developed countries. As America's union movement has challenged abusive capitalism here, workers everywhere now have to confront abusive global capital.

Our parents and grandparents willed to us a century to be proud of. We will do the same for our heirs.

*John J. Sweeney*

## America @ work

January 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 1  
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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

**John J. Sweeney**, President   **Richard L. Trumka**, Secretary-Treasurer

**Denise Mitchell** (Assistant to the President for Public Affairs); **Danna M. Jablanski** (Publications Director); **Tula Cannell** (Editor); **Mike Hall**, **David Kameras**, **James B. Parks** (Assistant Editors); **Arlee C. Green**, **Laureen Lazarovici** (Staff Writers); **Calleen M. O'Neill** (Proofreader/Copy Editor). Design: The Magazine Group Inc.

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Special thanks to **David Kameras** and **Marion Taylor** for their work on this issue.

**Linda Chavez-Thompson**, Executive Vice President

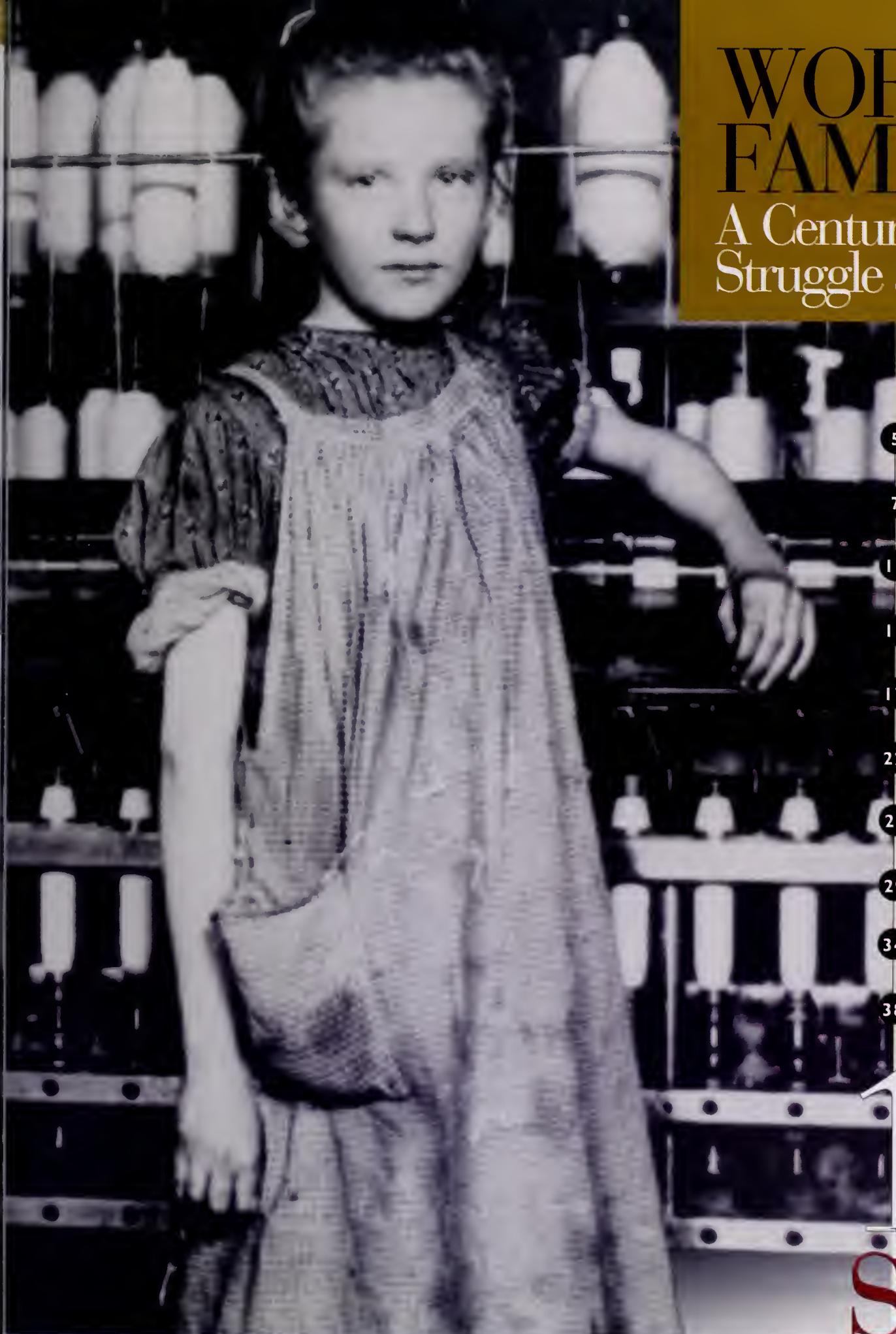
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When you see  
**unions@work**

and our  
**members@work**  
and collective power

in our  
**communities@work**,  
that's when you see

**America**  
**@**  
**work**



# WORKING FAMILIES: A Century of Struggle and Success

## TIMELINE:

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- 13 1930-1939
- 17 1940-1949
- 22 1950-1959
- 25 1960-1969
- 29 1970-1979
- 34 1980-1989
- 38 1990-1999

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

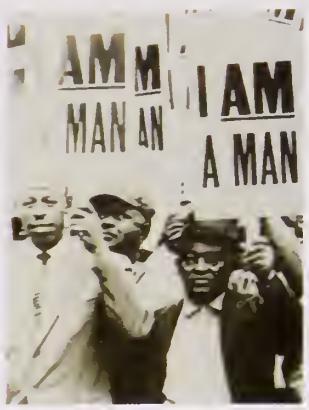
## LSO INSIDE:

### CURRENTS

Making kids aware of child labor  
Crown boycott gains ground  
Actors, writers push for diversity

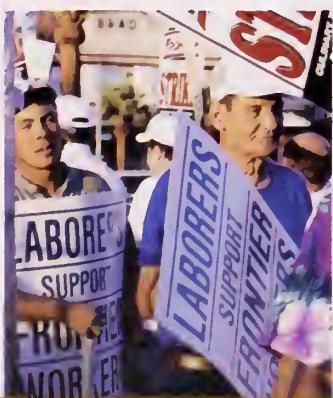
### 47 HOMEPAGE

Websites for fighting sweatshops  
Exhibit chronicles hazardous work  
*The Perils of the Growing American Wealth Gap*



• **What does labor want?**  
We want more school-houses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful and childhood more happy and bright.

—AFL PRESIDENT SAMUEL GOMPERS



NE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, American workers faced a bleak future. Men, women and often their children worked long hours in unsafe conditions for meager wages in their struggle to pay the rent and put food on the family table. As the century dawned, workers increasingly began joining together in a nationwide union movement to counter the brutal working conditions of the Industrial Age.

The following photo essay bears witness to the efforts of working families throughout the decades as they struggled for living wages, safe working conditions and respect on the job. Through strikes, walkouts and other collective action, in dangerous coal mines and factory sweatshops, on construction sites and in packing plants, workers risked their jobs and sometimes their lives to make the American dream a reality.

Over the past century, working families sought to create an America in which children go to school, not to work, and won passage of one of the world's first laws preventing child labor. They envisioned a country where an eight-hour working day would make it possible to spend time with their families and, industry by industry, succeeded in their goal. They suffered through an era in which hundreds of thousands of families lived destitute in the Dust Bowl and in crowded tenements, and won laws providing basic support for working families through Social Security, unemployment insurance and the minimum wage.

As America's working families and their unions have struggled to meet the challenges over the decades, they have confronted the same social and economic transformation faced by a changing American society, with union leaders debating the best strategies for achieving political and organizing goals, acknowledging and responding to an increasingly diverse workforce and union membership and recognizing how policies determining global trade directly affect workers in this nation and in every country.

At the close of the century, working families that make up the union movement can reflect on their successes and the renewed strength that has resulted in recent victories: The first increase in the minimum wage since 1989, the defeat of Fast Track efforts to increase unacceptable trade deals, the boost in union family voter registration by half a million in 1998 and the slowing of efforts by the World Trade Organization to block inclusion of workers' rights in global trade agreements.

The struggle of union members and their families is the story of American workers endeavoring to improve their lives and the future for their children. Together, we will complete the tasks awaiting us as we continue to work for a nation in which every worker has a voice in the 21st century.

# TIMELINE

# 1900-1909



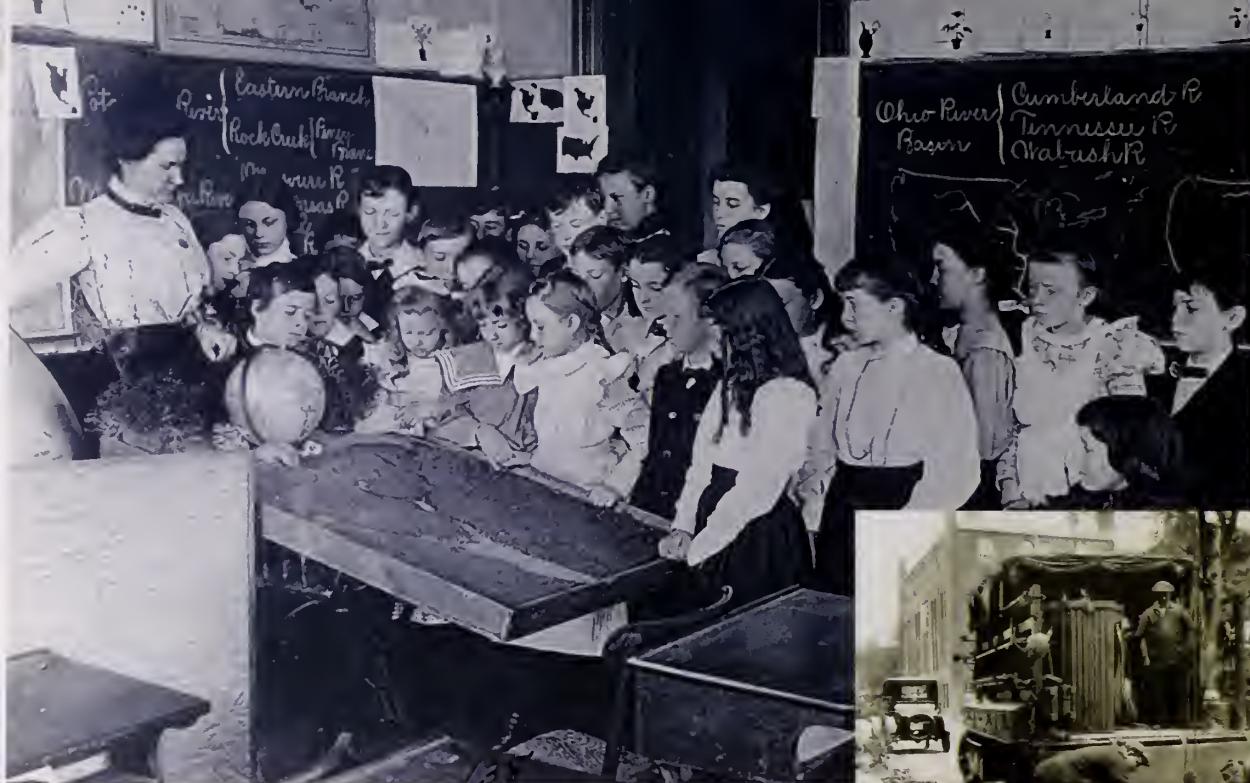
◀ Children at work in the early 1900s.

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

• 1900

• 1902

• 1904



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

► Public school teachers played a major role in preparing millions of immigrant children for work and life in a new world.



AFL-CIO FILE PHOTO

► Craft workers were among the first to join together in unions.

▼ Union members worked for passage of legislation banning child labor.



▲ The aftermath of the 1914 Ludlow massacre by state militiamen of 20 striking miners and their family members in Colorado, where 66 people were killed during the strike.

• 1906

• 1908

▼ Automobile workers were among the first to join together in unions.

# 1910-1919



▼ The 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire killed scores of young women and men and trapped 700 workers inside a building with locked stairwells.



• I rushed downstairs, and when I reached the sidewalk, the girls were already jumping from the windows. They stood on the windowsills tearing their hair out in handfuls, and then they jumped. One girl held back after all the rest and clung to the window casing until the flames from the window below crept up to her and set her clothing on fire. Then she jumped far over the net and was killed instantly, like all the rest.

—BENJAMIN LEVY, WITNESS TO THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE, 1911

• 1910

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**



▲ Clothing workers, often children, toiled long hours for little pay in sweatshop conditions.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

◀ Trade unionists from around the post-World War I world created the International Labor Organization in 1919.

• 1912

▼ AFL President Samuel Gompers (front, center) helped launch the International Labor Organization.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



▲ Socialist Eugene V. Debs had the support of many union members in his 1912 bid for president.



“Pray for the dead,  
and fight like hell  
for the living.”

—MOTHER JONES, 1902

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

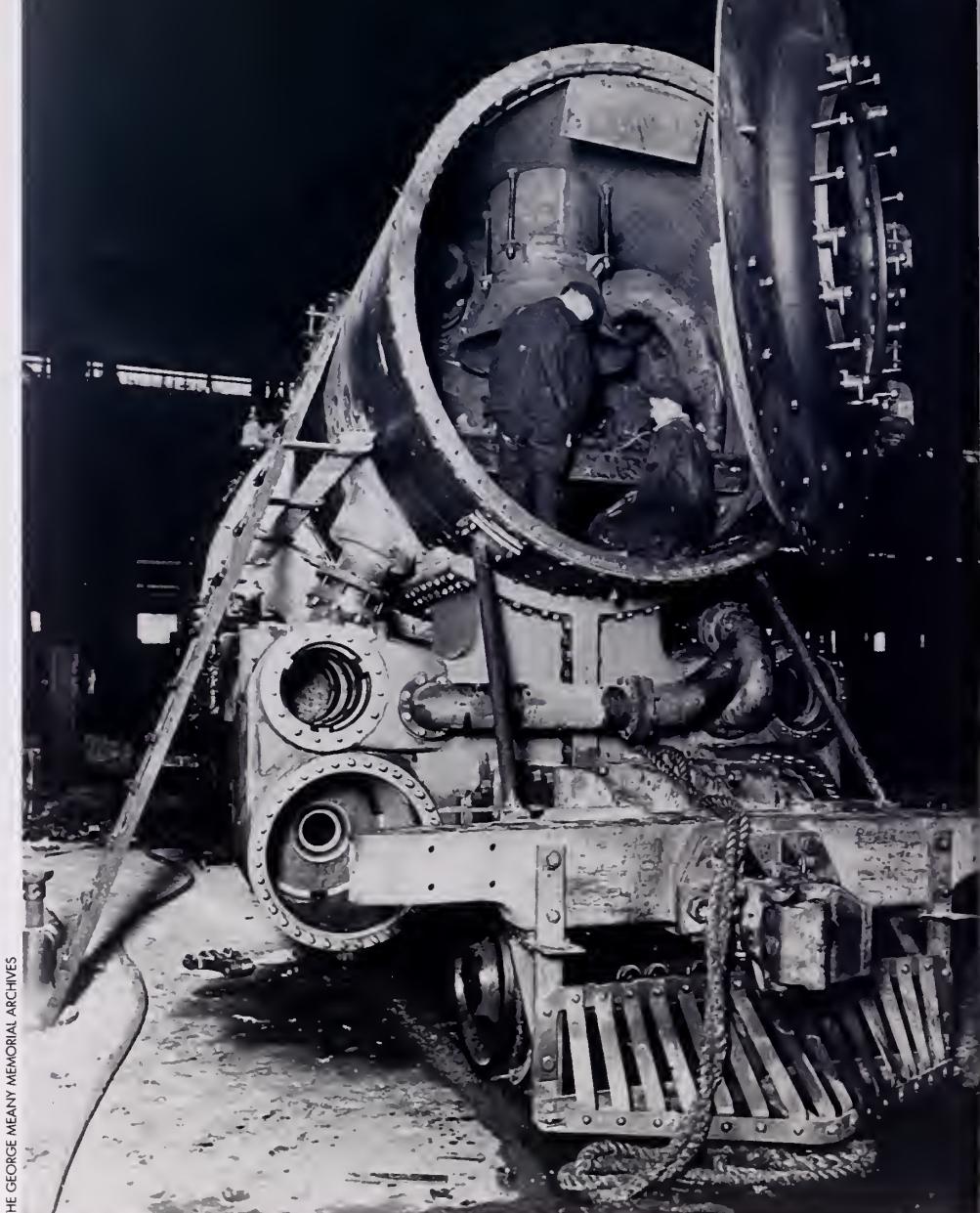
1914

• 1916

► Working through their unions, railroad workers were among the first in the nation to achieve the eight-hour day in 1916.

“Don’t mourn for me. Organize.”

—ORGANIZER JOE HILL’S LAST WORDS  
BEFORE EXECUTION  
ON TRUMPED-UP CHARGES, 1915



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



SEAFARERS

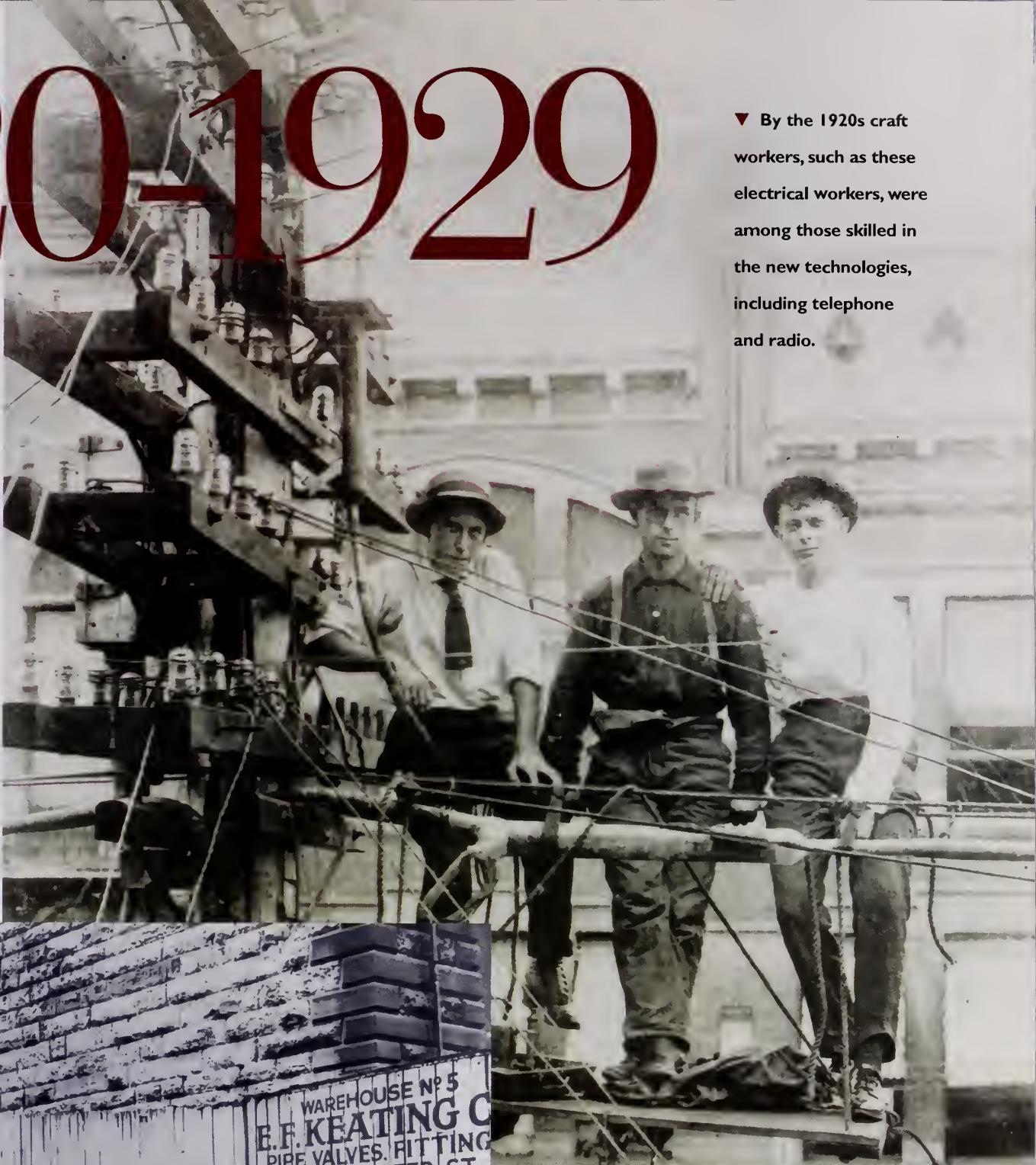
► International Seamen’s Union President Andrew Furuseth helped secure legislation protecting merchant mariners in 1915.

• 1918

# 1920-1929

▼ Hundreds of thousands of workers who lost their jobs in the Great Depression joined in bread lines across the nation.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



▼ By the 1920s craft workers, such as these electrical workers, were among those skilled in the new technologies, including telephone and radio.

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

• 1920

• 1922



▲ Women won the right to vote in 1920.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

▲ The National Labor Relations Act, signed by President Roosevelt in 1935, protected the right of American workers to organize and bargain collectively.

“No business which depends for existence on paying less than living wage to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By living wages I mean more than a bare subsistence level. I mean the wages of decent living.

—PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 1935

• 1924

• 1926

• 1928

# 1930-1939



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

▼ The Depression drove many farmers off their land and fueled a large African American migration from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North.



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVEL EXHIBITION SERVICE (SITES)

▼ A Depression-era striker.



BALTIMORE STEELWORKERS HISTORY PROJECT

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1930



▲ Thousands of Americans from throughout the Dust Bowl were forced to leave their homes in the 1930s.

• 1932

• 193

In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath  
are filling and growing heavy,  
growing heavy for the vintage. <sup>99</sup>

—THE GRAPES OF WRATH, 1939

▼ Mine workers, hard hit by the economic collapse of the 1930s,  
demanded relief for jobless workers and their families.



OTTO HAGEL/LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION

▲ Led by President Harry Bridges, the Longshoremen and Warehousemen helped close down San Francisco in a 1934 general strike.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1936

“Let the workers organize. Let the toilers assemble. Let their crystalized voice proclaim their injustices and demand their privileges. Let all thoughtful citizens sustain them, for the future of labor is the future of America.”

—MINE WORKERS PRESIDENT JOHN L. LEWIS

MINE WORKERS



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

▲ Emphasizing unionization by industry as well as craft, organizers focused on America's growing industrial base.

▼ With employers taking advantage of persistently high unemployment to slash wages, workers ended the 1930s with a series of massive strikes, notably in the automobile and steel industries.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

• 1938

# 1940-1949



• 1940

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**



▲ ▶ The wartime need for industrial workers provided new opportunities for women to work at jobs traditionally reserved for men.

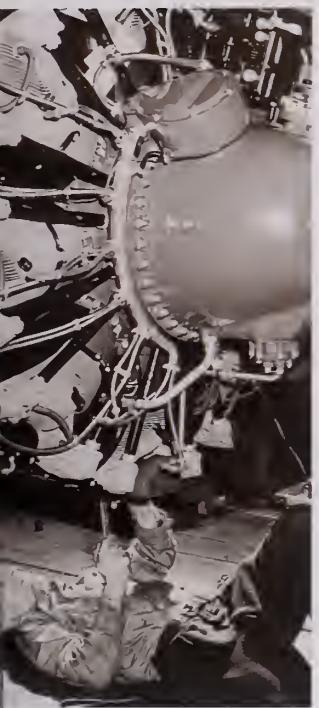
► War-driven technological advances increased the demand for highly skilled union workers.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

• 1942



“This is war—a people’s war—a war of the common man against old tyranny and new barbarisms. Ours is a labor movement unswerving in its devotion in the aims of freedom and in its determination to keep America strong and free.”

—AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS PRESIDENT SIDNEY HILLMAN, 1941

▼ Railroad workers were crucial to the war effort, moving materials to factories and finished armaments to ports.



▲ Workers joined across craft lines to produce the arms needed for the war.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

• 1944



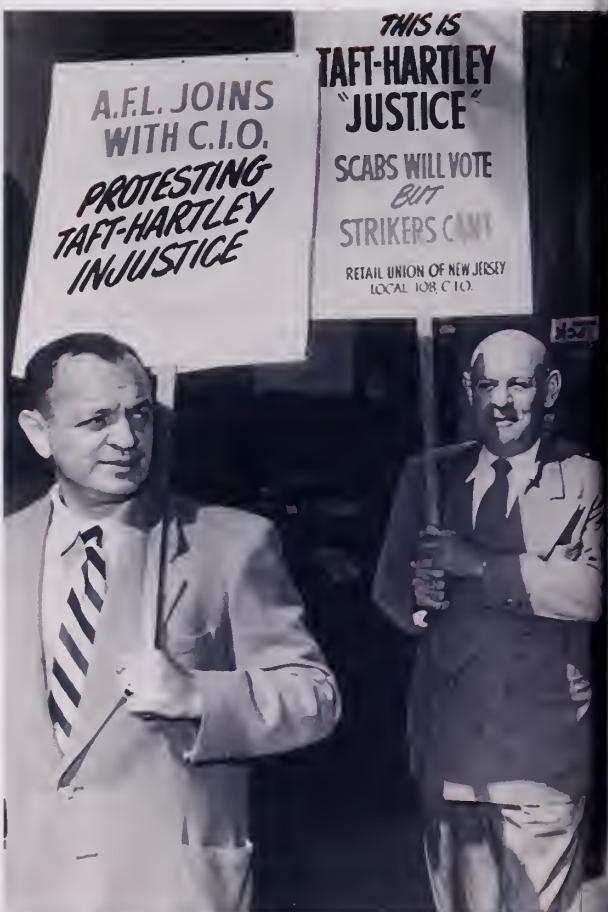
ACME NEWS PICTURES

▲ After helping to win the war with wage and work rule concessions, workers demanded restoration of workplace standards and job security.



PAT PHOTO SERVICE

◀ Big Business stepped up its efforts to crush unions after World War II.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

• 1946

► Unions increased their efforts to represent workers of all races in the late 1940s.

◀ Despite a veto by President Truman, Congress in 1946 enacted the Taft-Hartley Act, which bans secondary boycotts and closed shops, and makes union leaders liable for strike-related damages.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

• 1948

# 1950-1959



◀ The 1955 merger of the AFL under President George Meany and the CIO, headed by Walter Reuther, strengthened the efforts of union members to win living wages for all American workers.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



MICHIGAN CONSOLIDATED GAS COMPANY

◀ ▲ Health care workers (left) and public-sector employees (above) made up two of the nation's fastest-growing groups of union workers in the 1950s.



DRENNAN PHOTO SERVICES

• 1950

• 1952



◀ ▶ Historically low-paid service workers joined unions to demand decent wages and working conditions.



Only a fool would try to deprive working men and women of the right to join a union of their choice.

—PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1954

► The merged AFL-CIO strengthened American workers' success in political and legislative action.



“ There's a direct relationship between the bread box and the ballot box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls. ” —UAW PRESIDENT WALTER REUTHER

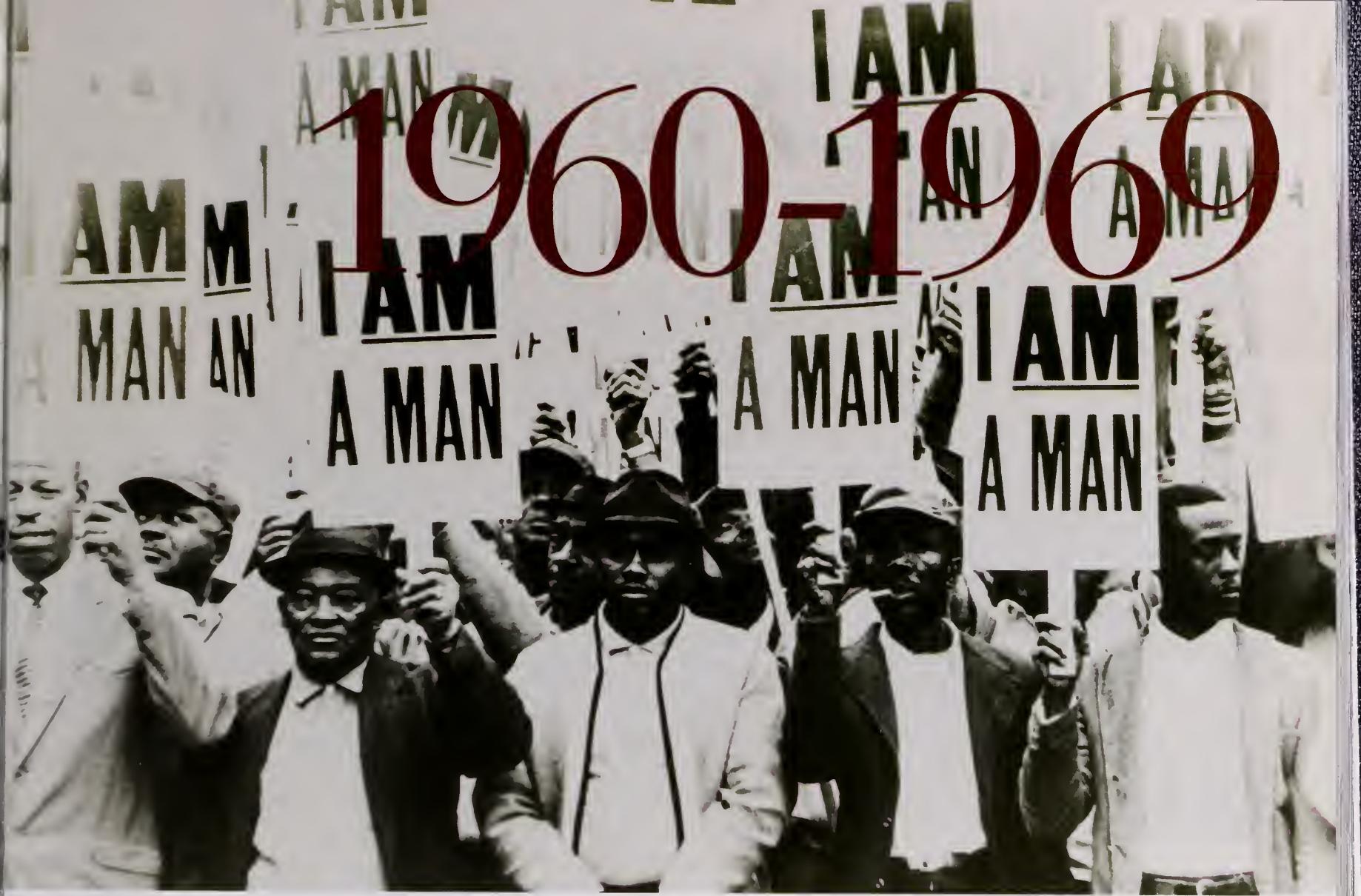
▼ AFL-CIO unions helped secure a progressive agenda for the Democratic party and the 1960 presidential election of John F. Kennedy.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

• 1956

• 1958



▲ The civil rights movement revealed the common interests shared by African Americans and all workers.



◀ The A. Philip Randolph Institute joined with the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education to register thousands of minority voters in the 1960s.



WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

◀ Rapid growth in the service sector provided new organizing opportunities for American trade unions.

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1960



▲ Unions helped craft Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits job discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender and national origin.



◀ Tens of thousands of union members and other Americans participated in the 1963 March on Washington.

• 1962

• 19



◀ Farm Workers  
President César  
Chávez (center).

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. And you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.”

—CÉSAR CHÁVEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED FARM WORKERS

1000  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1966

In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, as 'right to work.' It provides no rights and no work. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining. We demand this fraud be stopped. " "

—REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



• 1968

# 1970-1979



AP PHOTO/FILE

▲ Union members backed President Carter, who was elected to office in 1976.



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

► Thousands of Americans were out of work in the 1970s, as industries increasingly shifted production to low-wage countries.

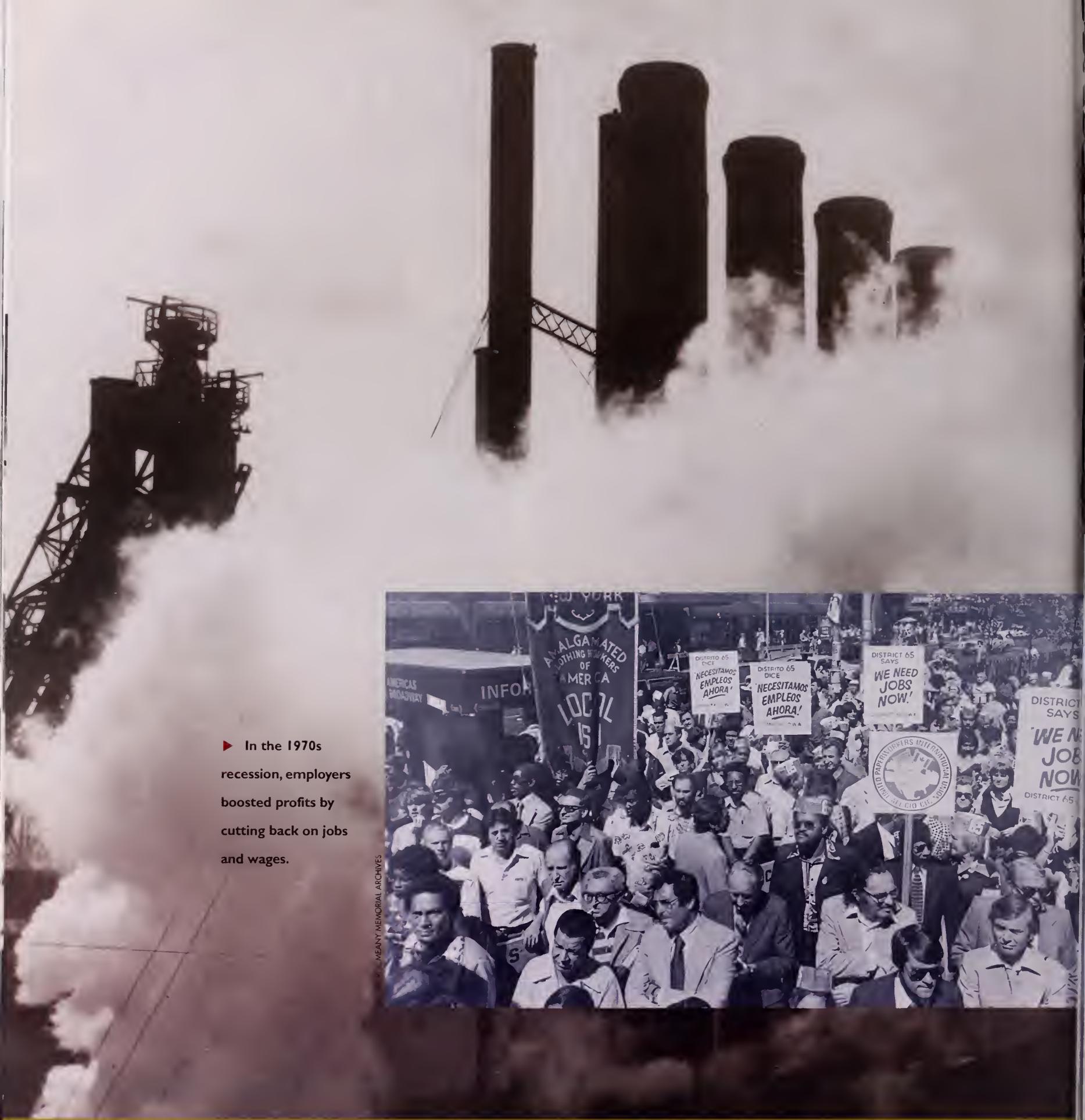


THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

▲ In 1979, federal workers demonstrated in 40 cities against pay caps and proposals to reduce future salaries and benefits.

• 1970

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success



► In the 1970s recession, employers boosted profits by cutting back on jobs and wages.

MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

• 1972

▼ Workers turned out to support the Davis-Bacon Act, which was under attack by Big Business.



## COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN



IMAGES UNLIMITED



◀ Formed in 1974, the Coalition of Labor Union Women increased unions' fight against gender discrimination and sought greater diversity in union leadership.

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1974

“ No matter whether you are a man or a woman, you should be able to get promotions and the same pay. We want to be considered for promotions like the men are. We want to be judged on our ability, not because we are women. ”

—IRENE WALLIN, ONE OF THE “WILLMAR 8,”  
AN ALL-WOMAN UNION THAT LAUNCHED  
MINNESOTA’S FIRST BANK STRIKE,  
IN MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE, 1978



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

▲ Public school teachers made quality education and teacher staffing a call to action across the nation in the 1970s.



POSTAL WORKERS

◀ When Postal Workers went on strike in 1970, they were threatened by 30,000 troops sent into New York by President Nixon.

• 1976

► Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970, which imposes far-reaching standards and enforcement mechanisms to achieve safer workplaces.

▼ Facing virulent management attacks in right-to-work states, needle trades unions struggled to organize workers across the South.

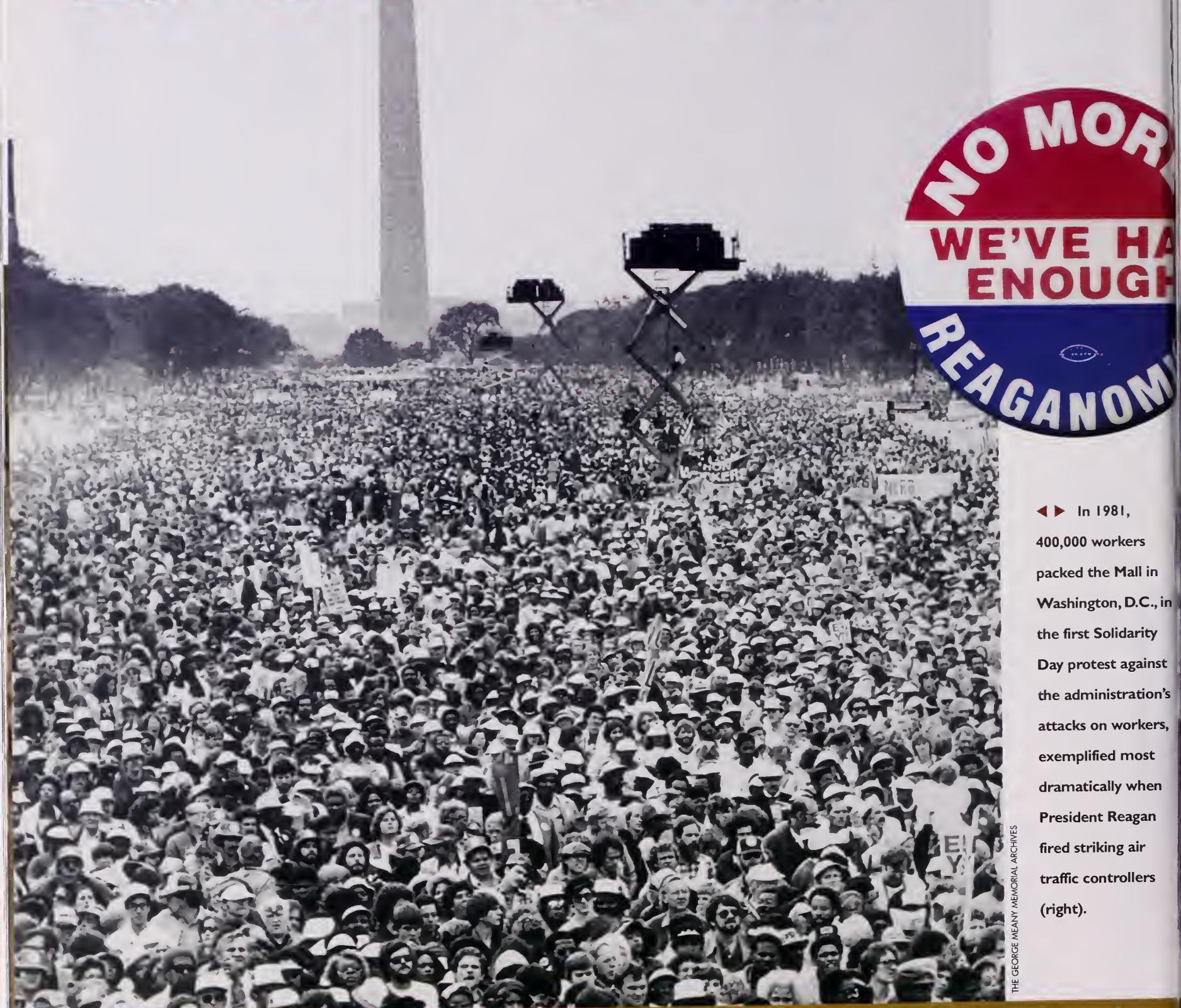
EARL DOTTER



100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

• 1978

# 1980-1989



►► In 1981, 400,000 workers packed the Mall in Washington, D.C., in the first Solidarity Day protest against the administration's attacks on workers, exemplified most dramatically when President Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers (right).

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

• 1980

• 19



AP PHOTO/FILE

▲ AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland.

“It’s our lives at stake,  
and they’re worth  
the sacrifice.”

—STRIKING PATCO MEMBER DENNIS LEBEAU, 1981



SCRIBPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPERS



100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1984



◀ ▶ Throughout the 1980s, union workers such as those in IAM and ALPA protested the rise of such anti-union entrepreneurs as Frank Lorenzo, CEO of Eastern and Continental airlines.



• 1986



▼ Mine Workers in the 1989-90 Pittston Coal strike waged massive civil disobedience actions.



ILL. FESTER / MINE WORKERS

100  
Years of  
**Struggle**  
AND **Success**

• 1988

# 1990-1999

▼ Workers from unions such as HERE, IBT and Operating Engineers stood strong with support from other unions and the community to achieve success after a nearly six-year strike at the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas.



RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE



TOM JOHNSON

▲ Some 760 Paperworkers were locked out of the A.S. Staley plant in 1993.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

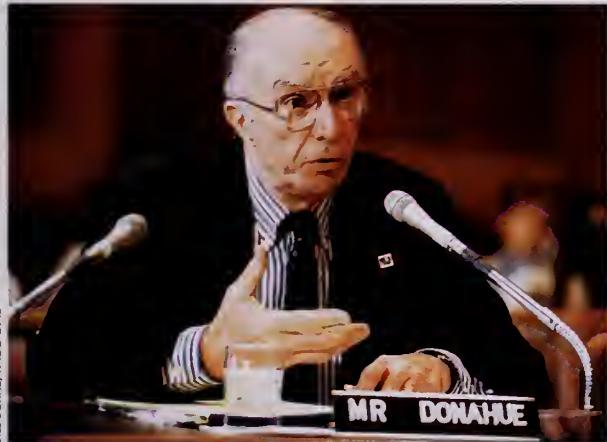
• 1990



AP PHOTO/DOUG ATKINS

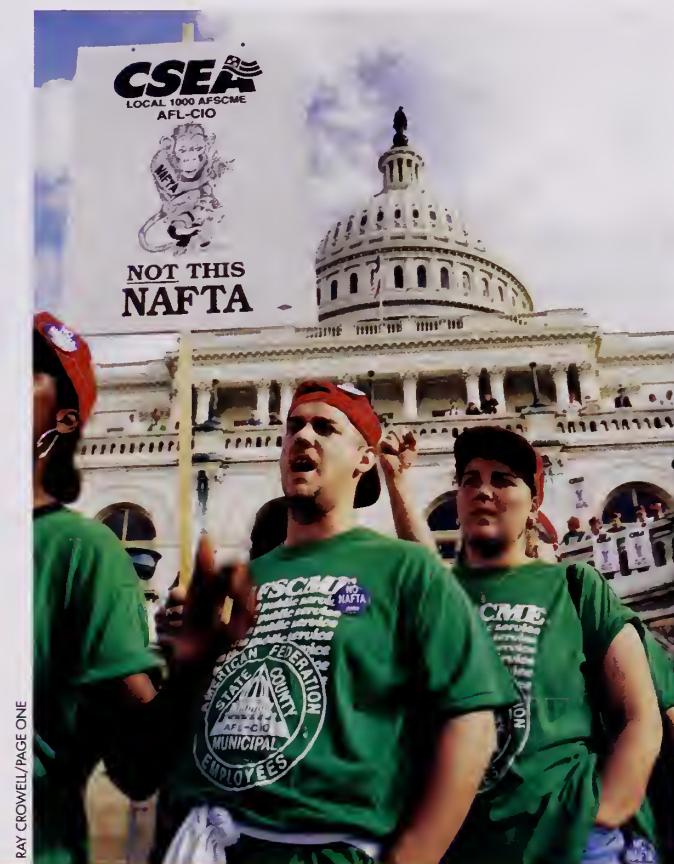
▲ Workers such as those in the 1992 strike at Caterpillar fought employers' increasing attempts to use permanent replacements in place of the collective bargaining process.

▼ AFL-CIO President Thomas Donahue.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Unions launched a renewed effort to organize workers in the late 1990s, involving member-organizers in the fight for a voice at work.



RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

◀ Passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993 resulted in job losses.

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1992

► Student activism grows nationwide in the fight to end sweatshop labor and in organizing efforts among teaching assistants.



MARILYN HUMPHRIES/IMPACT VISUALS

▲ Union members increased grassroots political action in the 1990s.

▼ SEIU capped a decade-long organizing effort when nearly 75,000 Los Angeles County home care workers joined the union in 1999.



\*MORE FULL-TIME JOBS  
\*HIGHER PAY RAISES  
\*NO SUBCONTRACTING  
\*NO COMPANY TAKEOVER OF HEALTH & PENSION BENEFITS

▲ More than 37,000 public school teachers joined the AFT and 10,000 cafeteria workers voted for the UAW in 1999 as part of a multiunion organizing effort in Puerto Rico.

▲ Teamsters successfully struck United Parcel Service in 1997.



NICK UT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

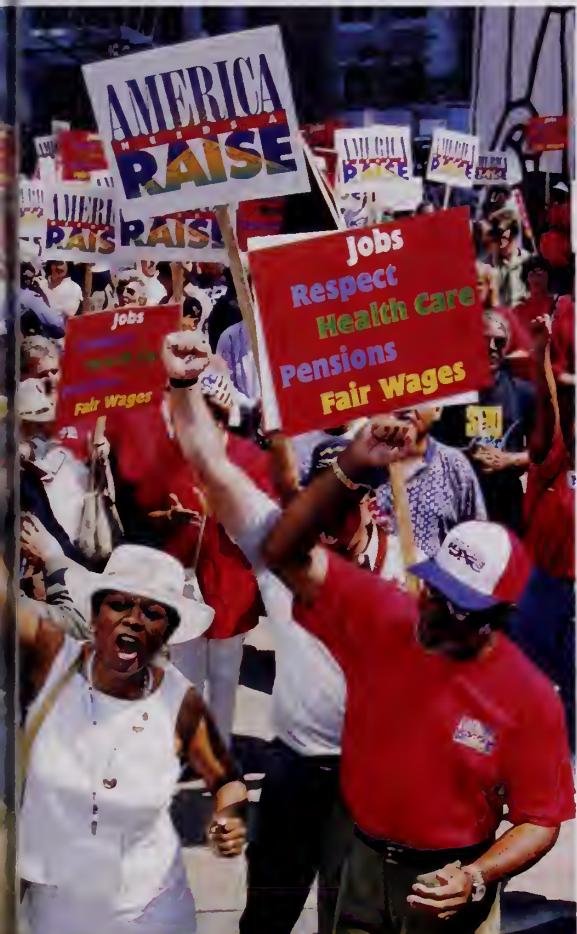
• 1994



“Getting to know other student activists, other labor activists, the men and women who face oppression each day and who still have the courage to speak out, made me realize how powerful we can be, working together.”

—GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY STUDENT ACTIVIST LAURA MCSPEDON, 1999

▼ Town hall meetings and rallies were part of the AFL-CIO America Needs a Raise campaign, which, beginning in 1996, helped win a minimum wage increase and advocated for better jobs.



▲ In 1996, after a 28-month struggle by more than 4,000 Rubber Workers (who merged with Steelworkers in 1995), union members at Bridgestone/Firestone stopped the largest private-sector effort to permanently replace lawfully striking workers.

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

• 1996



◀ John Sweeney, Richard Trumka and Linda Chavez-Thompson were elected in 1995 to head the AFL-CIO on a slate that emphasized increased organizing and diversity among union leadership.

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

▼ After years of management intimidation, workers at Avondale shipyard gained a voice at work in 1999.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



▲ Workers in Seattle slowed efforts by the World Trade Organization to adopt new trade rules that ignore worker and environmental rights.

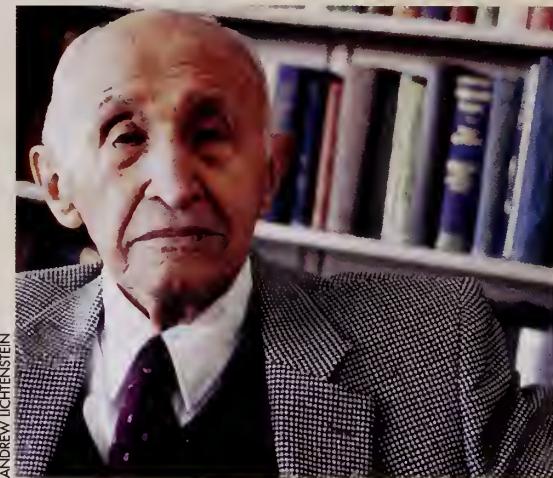
• 1998

## BUILDING A LEGACY...

**W**hen Joseph Jacobson first started working as an errand boy at age 14 to help support his family, the streets of New York were filled with horse-drawn carriages. A few years later, in 1923, when he became a journeyman electrician and signed on with the Electrical Workers, he worked in buildings that were never taller than 25 stories. Much has changed since then, but Jacobson, at 101, still stands strong at the close of the century, donning suit and tie every day for his job as IBEW Local 3 volunteer retiree association president.

"My advice to other retirees is, 'Don't just sit down and do nothing. Do as much as you can to help people.' "

Jacobson, who oversees 3,500 retirees in



ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN

the union's 13 retiree chapters, has done so for the past 32 years, carrying on a tradition of active union involvement that includes 16 years as business representative. His life now crossing three centuries, Jacobson attributes his longevity to "helping other people."

Dennis McSpedon, Local 3 president, describes Jacobson as "an inspiration."

"Joe Jacobson brings out something in our retirees that is great to watch. When you see him, you want to hug him."

In the 1920s, "employers had the upper hand," says Jacobson. If you retired, you received \$40. If you died, the union took up a collection. Safety and health laws did not exist.

Today, working families and their unions are stronger through the efforts of those who, like Jacobson, have done as much as they can to help others. @

# Standing Together As One

## ...AND CARRYING IT INTO THE FUTURE

**S**ue Sierra worked on social issues in the early 1990s, but says she burned out from pursuing high ideals while achieving few accomplishments to show for her efforts. Then she entered a Ph.D. program in mathematics at the University of Michigan.

"When I got to grad school, I was lucky enough to get a union job" as a teaching assistant, she says. "That's when I realized it's addictive to be a part of a social movement that works for social justice and actually makes things happen."

So, after volunteering with the Graduate Employees Organization/AFT 3550, which represents more than 1,600 student instructors at the Ann Arbor and Dearborn campuses, Sierra



DONNA DI PAOLO

left her academic program in 1997 to become a full-time organizer. Her work has spanned the continent, helping teaching assistants and research assistants score union victories at Wayne State University in Detroit and at Oregon State University in Corvallis. Now she's in Philadelphia as project director and organizer with the Temple University Graduate Students Association—"on the front lines of quality education," she says.

Sierra enjoys organizing because she sees the difference that union membership makes in people's lives. "There's a kind of power that happens that you just don't have with any other kind of organization," she says. @

100  
Years of  
Struggle  
AND Success

2000



PACE INTERNATIONAL UNION

## Crown Boycott Gains Ground

**T**reating workers fairly is good business, as illustrated most recently when a potential buyer for Crown Petroleum—where management's lockout of more than 250 PACE International Union workers four years ago prompted a nationwide boycott—said “satisfactory resolution of the boycott” is a condition of any sale.

Paul Novelly, CEO of Apex Oil Company and a major Crown shareholder, set the condition late last year and signaled his disgust with the company's plummeting stock price. PACE officials say Novelly's action shows the boycott—supported

by union, religious and community groups—is working.

“This offer clearly recognizes that union and civil rights problems which prompted the expanding boycott must be resolved if the company has any future,” says Joe Drexler, PACE director of special projects. “A change in Crown management and ownership and settling labor and civil rights problems represent the only way to restore Crown to profitability and ensure a fair return to stockholders.” To see what you can do to support the Crown boycott, visit [www.crownboycott.org](http://www.crownboycott.org). ☐

### SPOTLIGHT

## Poster Contest Makes Kids Aware of Child Labor

**H**ow do sweatshops and child labor affect me and my school? Do you know who makes your clothes? Those are the questions union and religious activists are asking school children in New York to ponder by sponsoring a “Sweatfree Schools” poster contest.

“By teaching students about the pervasive reality of sweatshops and child labor—and urging communities to be more responsible consumers—we can create a powerful force to affect public attitudes and eliminate social injustice,” says Thomas Hobart, president of the New York State United Teachers, an AFT affiliate, which is underwriting the prizes in the contest (\$1,000 and \$500 U.S. Savings Bonds for the top two posters in each of four grade categories).

The contest, launched by the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition, is part of a statewide campaign to stop child and sweatshop labor in New York and to discourage schools from purchasing such apparel as sports uniforms from companies that use sweatshop labor. Entries are due Feb. 25. For entry forms, visit [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) or call 518-459-5400, Ext. 6294. ☐

## ULLICO Launches Real Estate Equity Fund

**P**ension trustees looking for alternative investments to diversify their holdings now have another option with Union Labor Life Insurance Company's new Real Estate Equity Fund. The fund is an investment lacking a fixed time limit or cap on investment amounts that is creating a portfolio of office buildings, retail centers, industrial properties, multifamily residences and mixed-use developments. The majority of the assets will be new developments and properties slated for redevelopment.

Similar to ULLICO's J for Jobs program, the new fund's projects will be 100 percent union,

including construction and building and maintenance services. By combining its financing with that of its investing partners, the fund will generate more union jobs with fewer dollars.

Mark Maloney, ULLICO vice president for national sales, notes the real estate market is very strong. “From a timing perspective, the introduction of the Equity Fund makes sense,” he says.

To find out more about the new fund, contact David Glasner, ULLICO's director of real estate investments, at: 202-682-4905; or write: Union Labor Life, 111 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. ☐

## 1-800.com: The Wrong Number

**D**irectory assistance for some numbers could be on permanent hold if AT&T has its way. The company has asked the Federal Communications Commission for permission to shift all 800-number directory assistance to the Internet, a move the Communications Workers says would hurt the poor, seniors

and others who do not have access to online services.

“This move will cost jobs, deny millions of Americans access to a vital service and hurt businesses that depend on their connection to customers,” says CWA President Morton Bahr.

Millions of Americans who are not online will have to pay extra to access 411 or other directory assistance, CWA says.

AT&T's shift to Internet directory assistance assumes that most people have access to the Internet, but CWA points to Commerce Department figures that show only 13 percent of families earning less than \$25,000 are online—and the figure is less than 8 percent for those earning less than \$15,000. Only 11 percent of seniors are online, the Commerce Department says, as are 13 percent of Latinos and 11 percent of African Americans. ☐



AP PHOTO/NBC

## Actors, Writers Join Push for Diversity

Based on studies showing that prime-time television has few roles for minorities, both in front of and behind the cameras, the Screen Actors Guild and the unaffiliated Writers Guild of America, west are urging network television executives to include more minorities.

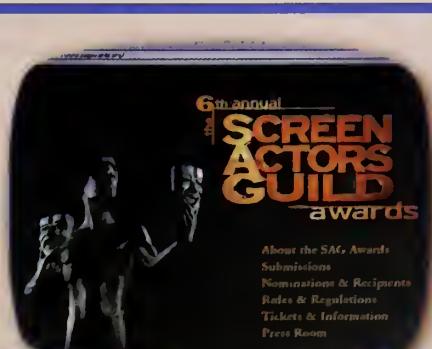
In an exhaustive study begun in October, SAG plans to tape 735 hours of television shows through February to examine "how African Americans are portrayed, what impact they make and indicate opportunities that were lost," SAG member Anne-Marie Johnson told the *Los Angeles Times*. "We also want to highlight shows that are doing the right thing." SAG is conducting similar studies on

the television portrayals of Latinos and Native Americans, she says. Currently, only a handful of minority characters are featured in the prime-time shows that premiered this season, according to a 1999 NAACP study.

The Writers Guild, west plans to begin discussions with the networks, TV producers and studios about adding more minorities to the writing staff of prime-time shows. A study by the Los Angeles NAACP showed that of 839 writers on prime-time shows, only 55 are African American, 11 are Latino and three are Asian American. There currently are no Native American writers on these shows. @

## SAG Awards to Air in March

The 6th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards presentation—the only television network show honoring union members—can be seen live on TNT Sunday, March 12. During the two-hour show, SAG will present actor Sidney Poitier the Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award and 13 awards for acting in film and television. For more information on the awards, check out the SAG website: [www.sagawards.org](http://www.sagawards.org). @



**Emergency:** Despite the success of such ethnically diverse shows as "ER" and "NYPD Blue," none of the more than two dozen new network comedies and dramas features a minority in a leading role.

## Michigan Students Take Union History Tour

*"I now realize / That there is help for me / The Union stands by my side / And they speak out for me."*

—By Jennifer Stokes

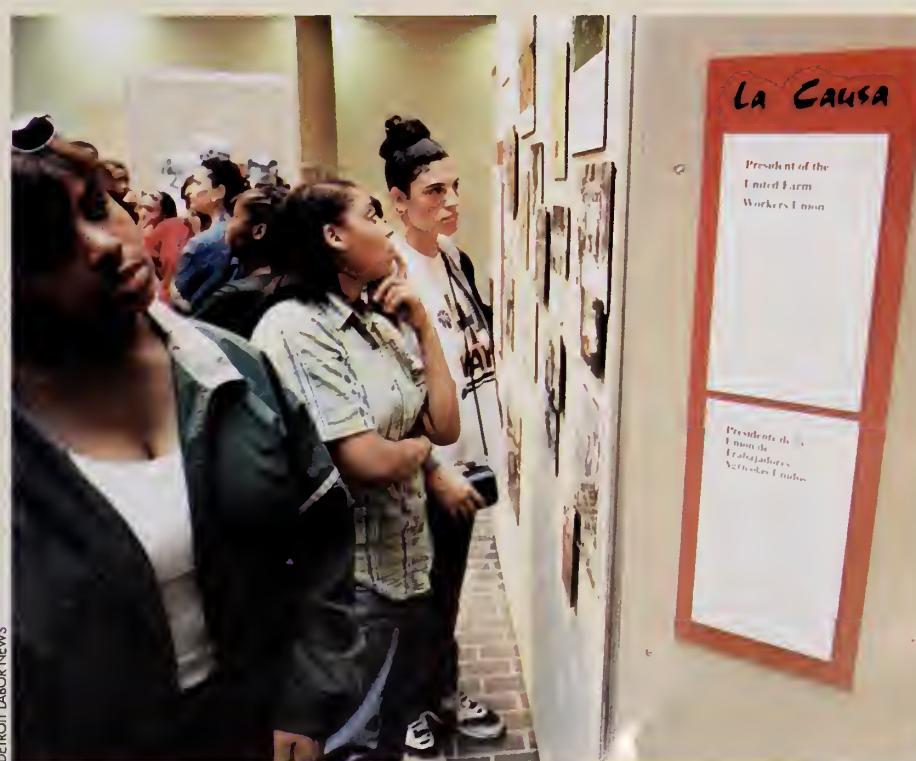
"Union" recently became more than a word in a history book for Jennifer Stokes. The ninth-grade student's poem about the importance of unions, "No Longer Alone," received an award from the Michigan Labor History Society.

Stokes and 34 of her classmates at Detroit's Cass Technical High School were some of the first students to embark on a daylong special union history tour designed to counter the absence of labor history in their history text. Only one page of 800 in the text is

devoted to labor history, according to the Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Union Label Committee.

The tour included an interactive skit about working conditions early in the century, a trip to Miller Road Overpass—the symbolic site where Ford workers won the battle to form a union—and visits with leaders of UAW Local 600.

The Union Label Committee and the Labor History Society sponsored the tour to help young people learn about and appreciate unions' contributions to American society. @



Field trip: Students from Detroit's Cass Technical High School look over a César Chávez display at Wayne State University's Walter Reuther Library.

# Vice President Gore Joins Iowa Working Women

Vice President Al Gore joined working women at the AFL-CIO's latest "Ask a Working Woman"



Speaking out: Vice President Al Gore at the Waterloo "Ask a Working Woman" forum.

forum on Dec. 10 in Waterloo, Iowa. He spent the morning listening to their concerns about the need for improvements in education, Social Security and health care. Nurse Melinda Penhook, a member of SEIU Local 1199/Iowa City—who came to the meeting after a night shift—told Gore the government ought to do more to help parents get child care. Food and Commercial Workers Local 431 member Deb Dyer

described the staffing shortage at the Cedar Falls nursing home where she works, and that residents there are burdened with high prescription drug costs. "Some residents try to stretch out their medications, sometimes taking one pill instead of the two that their doctors prescribe," Dyer says. "The vice president wants to protect Social Security and Medicare and wants to get seniors prescription drug coverage," Dyer says. "I was impressed with him."

The AFL-CIO's Working Women's Department held forums throughout 1999 with working women, elected officials and policy experts to ensure working women's voices are heard on issues such as child care, education, equal pay and health care. ☐

MARK SMESTAD



Organizing: Public employees in Puerto Rico are getting a voice at work after a decades-long fight for a collective bargaining law.

## Wins Mount in Puerto Rico

**O**n the heels of a huge organizing victory for nearly 40,000 teachers, thousands more education-related workers voted for a voice on the job in Puerto Rico, where a recent law allows public employees to form unions. About 10,000 school cafeteria workers joined the UAW in November. And in December, nearly 5,700 school janitors, maintenance and warehouse workers at the Department of Education voted to join SEIU after months of protests to draw attention to shortages of equipment and basic cleaning supplies. In addition, about 5,600 school office and administrative workers signed up with PASO, Personal Administrativo, Secretarial y de Oficina, an organization jointly affiliated with SEIU and AFSCME. SEIU will represent about 4,200 school-based personnel, while AFSCME will bring a voice on the job to about 1,400 workers in central administrative offices.

"Our recent victories in Puerto Rico were the result of a vigorous four-year grassroots mobilization effort that included literally hundreds of volunteer organizers from all sectors of public employment," says AFSCME President Gerald McEntee. ☐

## MEXICAN TRUCK RESTRICTIONS REMAIN IN PLACE

**A**s a result of the efforts of working families who contacted their elected officials, Mexican trucks did not get unfettered access to U.S. highways on Jan. 1 as previously scheduled under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Instead, the vehicles must travel only within the current 20-mile commercial zone limit beyond the U.S. border.

"Working families throughout the United States appreciate

this bold step taken by the Clinton administration," says Teamsters President James P. Hoffa. "No longer will companies be allowed to use NAFTA to take our jobs and endanger our health and safety."

Unlike the United States, Mexico does not have vehicle maintenance standards, a safety ratings system or any restrictions on the number of hours a trucker—who often makes only \$7 a day—can drive (see

America@work, September 1999). Allowing the trucks unlimited access to U.S. highways would have threatened "the safety of American workers and the traveling public," Amalgamated Transit Union President James La Sala wrote in a letter to Congress last summer. IBT and ATU members persuaded members of Congress to ask President Clinton to keep the border closed to unsafe Mexican trucks. ☐

## Honoring a Fighter

President Clinton presents the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights to Farm Workers Secretary-Treasurer Dolores Huerta in a Dec. 6 White House ceremony. Clinton praised Huerta, who co-founded the union in 1962 with César Chávez, for "all she has done to protect the dignity and human rights of her family and America's family." Huerta was one of five to receive the award, which the administration established in 1998. ☐



AP PHOTO/J. SCOTT APPELWHITE

**Hazard: Needles found in soiled bed linens shipped from local hospitals to the Brooklyn Central Laundry.**



EARL DOTTER

## EXHIBIT

**The Quiet Sickness: A Photographic Chronicle of Hazardous Work in America**, a collection of 112 black-and-white photographs by Earl Dotter, is on exhibit at the George Meany Center Memorial Archives through Feb. 25. Dotter took the photographs over the past 25 years, putting a personal face on the safety and health hazards that cause thousands of deaths and millions of injuries annually. Forty photos from the collection were exhibited recently at the U.S. Department of Labor. The photos on exhibit are featured in Dotter's book, *The Quiet Sickness*, available from AIHA Press, 703-849-8888. The Meany Center Archives is located at 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, Md. 20903; phone: 301-431-5451. @

## CATALOGS

The Labor Heritage Foundation's *Catalog of Music, Art, Books & Video* offers traditional and contemporary union music, art, posters, books, maps, note cards and buttons. The free catalog includes such artists and groups as Ani DiFranco, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Joe Hill, Anne Feeney, Holly Near, Ronnie Gilbert and the Whiteville Choir. Write the Labor Heritage Foundation at Suite 400, 1925 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-842-7810; or fax: 202-842-7838.

The Highlander Research and Education Center offers a free catalog, the *Highlander Collections: Books, Videos, Tapes, CDs*. The catalog includes *Roots*

of Injustice by Larry Salomon, which shows how ordinary people have successfully fought exploitation and injustice through organizing. Categories include popular education (such as *Grassroots Participatory Research: A Working Report from a Gathering of Practitioners*) and social change (*Co/Motion: Guide to Youth-led Social Change*). The Highlander Center, 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, Tenn. 37820; phone: 423-933-3443; fax: 423-933-3424; e-mail: hrec@igc.org; website: www.hrec.org. @

## PUBLICATION

**Shifting Fortunes: The Perils of the Growing American Wealth Gap** by Chuck Collins, Betsy Leondar-Wright and Holly Sklar, examines the rapidly widening wealth gap, showing the richest 1 percent of American households now own 40 percent of the wealth, up from 20 percent in 1976. The authors point out the underlying causes and propose solutions. \$6.95 per single copy; volume discounts available. Available through United for a Fair Economy, 2nd Floor, 37 Temple Place, Boston, Mass. 02111; phone: 877-564-6833 (toll-free for credit card orders) or 617-423-2148; fax: 617-423-0191. @

## ANTI-SWEATSHOP WEBSITES

[www.uniteunion.org/sweatshops/sweatshop.html](http://www.uniteunion.org/sweatshops/sweatshop.html)—UNITE's website offers the best one-stop location for information on sweatshops, including current anti-sweatshop campaigns, teaching resources, suggestions for individual action and a section for high school students. Includes a comprehensive list of links to other sweatshop sites.

[www.unite-svti.org](http://www.unite-svti.org)—UNITE's Canadian website has a "stop sweatshops" page and links to other anti-sweatshop groups around the world.

[www.umich.edu/~sole/usas](http://www.umich.edu/~sole/usas)—United Students Against Sweatshops' website covers student efforts to halt sweatshop labor in the production of apparel sold by universities.

[www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org)—The National Labor Committee works with local, national and international groups on campaigns to promote workers' rights. Its website provides information on current campaigns, including anti-sweatshop activities.

[www.labor-religion.org](http://www.labor-religion.org)—This site outlines the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition's Sweatfree Schools Campaign. The coalition urges schools to adopt a code of conduct for the manufacture of apparel purchased, licensed or required by schools in the state, and to educate students about sweatshops and fair labor practices.

[www.sweatshopwatch.org](http://www.sweatshopwatch.org)—Sweatshop Watch offers information on campaigns around the globe.

[www.takepride.org/home\\_page1.htm](http://www.takepride.org/home_page1.htm)—This website, sponsored by the Take Pride in America Coalition, seeks to inform the public about sweatshops on the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, where workers suffer intolerable conditions—even as companies legally use the "Made in USA" label.

[www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/)—This website provides a complete history of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Co. fire that killed 146 workers. Includes information on sweatshops and strikes prior to 1911, and audio interviews with survivors of the fire. @



# Sharing Our Stories

**Sharing Our Stories: Voices at Work**, published by the Coalition of Labor Union Women as an organizing tool, includes dozens of firsthand accounts by members about their involvement in CLUW and in the union movement. \$5. For more information or to order copies, contact CLUW at 1125 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; phone: 202-466-4610; fax: 202-776-0537; website: www.cluw.org. @

Come to the AFL-CIO

# Working Women's Conference 2000

Join 5,000 working women in Chicago March 11-12 who are making their voices heard!

*Look*

for new strategies... in organizing, politics and mobilizing.

*Hear*

workers' stories... from all over the globe.

*Talk back...*

to decision makers with the release of results from the 1999 Ask a Working Woman survey.

For conference registration materials call 202-637-5064 or e-mail us at: [women@aflcio.org](mailto:women@aflcio.org). Hurry, conference registration closes Feb. 15.



The opportunity for women union leaders to get together and share their stories is invigorating. I came back feeling I was more part of a team, and that I would be able to accomplish what I wanted to do.

—Sara Rogers, executive vice president, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, after attending the 1997 Working Women's Conference.

# America @work

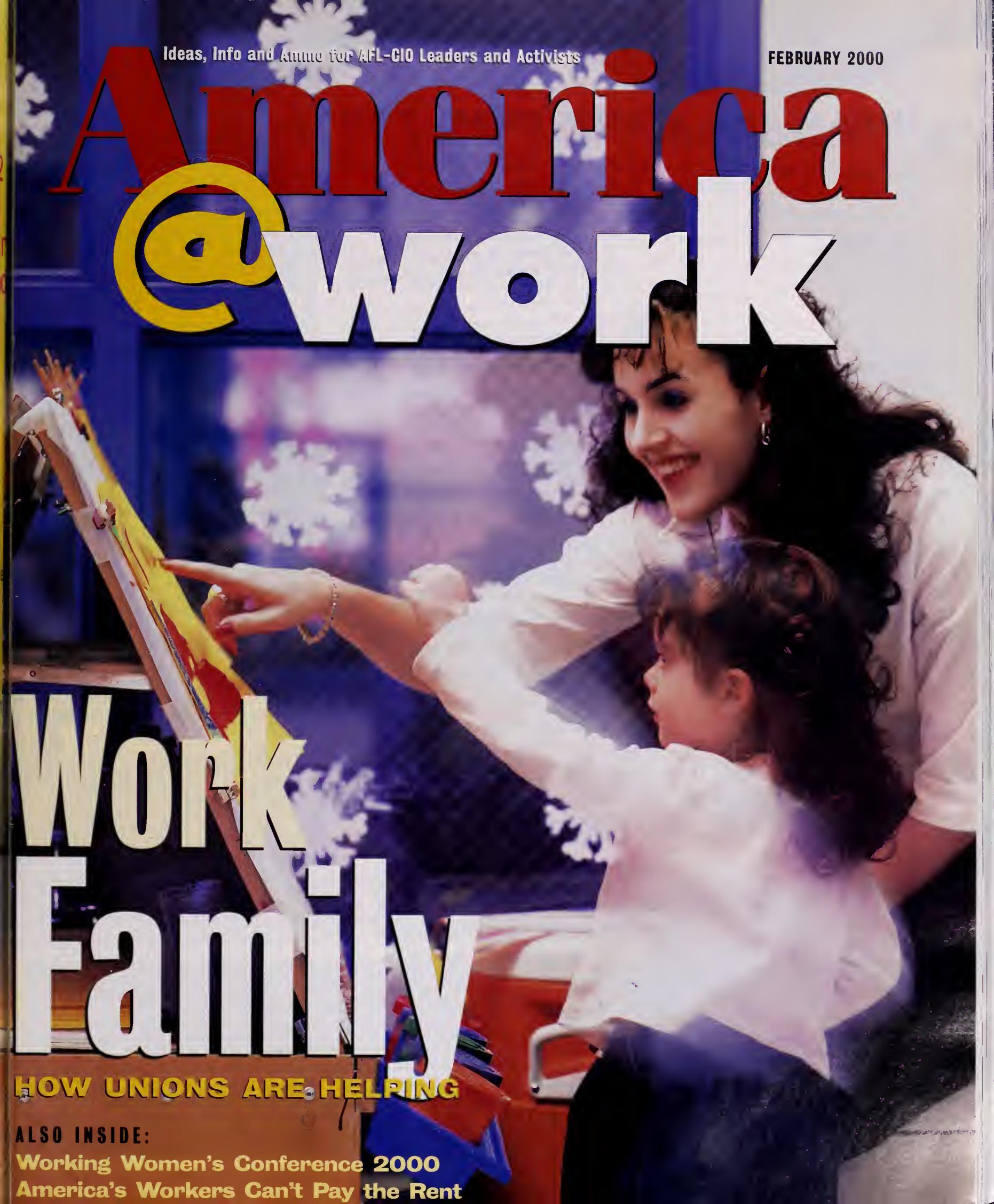
# Work Family

**HOW UNIONS ARE HELPING**

ALSO INSIDE:

Working Women's Conference 2000

America's Workers Can't Pay the Rent



## SAYING "NO" TO THE WTO

"Brothers and sisters, let me get sentimental with you. Marching in the [WTO] rally, I felt as if we were marching not just with the 50,000 people present, but that we had other companions as well. We honored the memory of those workers who participated in past democratic struggles....I thought about my Longshoremen grandfather and those in his local who had to carry guns to ensure...a safe working environment and community down South, as well as my Pullman porter great-grandfather and my great-grandmother....They would have gladly marched with us yesterday. Then I thought of my nephew and my unborn children and grandchildren, and how I was participating for them, not just for us in the present."—Paulette Thompson, Garfield High School, Seattle

"On Tuesday, Nov. 30, we organized a pledge card sign-in at the rally and march in Seattle. Card-signers pledged 'to join in making our voices heard wherever corporations seek to put profits before people and the environment.' These now are good mobilization cards. We have received back (to date; more are trickling in) a total of 8,075 cards."—Jonathan Rosenblum, director and lead organizer of Seattle Union Now, a joint organizing project of the AFL-CIO and the King County Labor Council

"The week before the World Trade Organization meeting and labor protest in Seattle, few of the students on the campus where I work could articulate how treaties between nations affect working conditions for foreign workers....Despite finals looming imminently, eight new students showed up at that week's Labor Studies/No Sweatshop meeting and took leadership assignments to monitor progress toward a sweat-free campus. Many of them spoke of the actions in Seattle....[W]here I work, it seems among college-educated youth that labor had taken on the mantle of a movement serious about changing the world; a movement worth joining if you want to make this world a better place."—Ellen Starbird, Laney College Labor Studies Club adviser, AFT Local 1603, Oakland, Calif.

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in *America@work*.

February 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 2

AFL-CIO Public Affairs Department  
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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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When you see  
**unions@work**

and our

**members@work**

and collective power

in our

**communities@work**,

that's when you see

"I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST your article on virtual organizing in the September issue of *America@work*....In my job as outreach librarian, I travel throughout New York State training labor union members on the use of the Internet....As part of the outreach classes, my colleague, Suzanne Cohen, and I have produced an extensive online bibliography of sites for labor unions. You can find this at <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/reference/Guides/LUI.html>....I feel very strongly about empowering union members through the use of the Internet, and am always looking for new partnerships and avenues to reach union members with our programs."—Deborah Joseph, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

"I HAVE TODAY READ YOUR PUBLICATION" *America@work* and found it most interesting. It illustrates to me that no matter the social and cultural differences between countries, the struggles of the working classes are the same."—Chris Birrell, national industrial officer, Australian Workers' Union, Redfern, New South Wales, Australia

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**Linda Chavez-Thompson**, Executive Vice President



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Economist Julianne Malveaux discusses the reasons for a family-friendly economy in which working families have fair pay, access to health care, transportation and affordable housing



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## GETTING SET FOR WORKING WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2000

When 5,000 working women from across the country gather for the March 11-12 conference, they will have an opportunity to talk about how to mobilize and organize new workers



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## AMERICA'S WORKERS CAN'T PAY THE RENT

Despite the growing economy, working families face a shortage of affordable housing



## Georgine Retires From BCTD

Robert Georgine, who served as president of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department for 26 years, is stepping down effective April 15. The BCTD's General Board of Presidents elected Edward C. Sullivan, president of the Eleva-



LANE WINDHAM

**Partners:** At George Cox Elementary School in Gretna, La., Robert Georgine takes part in the building and construction trades and AFT campaign to rebuild the nation's schools.

tor Constructors, to fill the remainder of Georgine's term, which expires in July. The board also elected Joseph Maloney, executive director of the Canadian office of BCTD, to fill the vacant post of secretary-treasurer.

Under Georgine's leadership, membership in building trades unions jumped 131,000 last year, the largest increase in decades, and union density in construction grew from 17 percent to 19 percent. Georgine, 67, began his union career as an Iron Workers helper in his native Chicago.

Georgine will remain chairman, president and CEO of the Union Labor Life Insurance Co. ☐

## Working Families Boost Gore to Two Wins

Working families mobilized and helped catapult Vice President Al Gore to dual wins in the nation's first two presidential votes. In the New Hampshire primary, three of every five union households voted for Gore. The union votes helped give Gore a 53 percent to 47 percent victory over former Sen. Bill Bradley, the early front-runner in the Feb. 1 vote.

"We talked to our members to an extent never done before," says New Hampshire AFL-CIO President Mark MacKenzie. "Union members handed 15,000 worksite leaflets to other union members. And in the end, we turned out more members to vote."

Gore's victories set the stage for the March 7 Super Tuesday showdown in more than a dozen states.

On Jan. 24, Iowa union families helped Gore gain 63 percent of the vote compared with Bradley's 34 percent. Some 74 percent of union households supported Gore. ☐



**GOTV:** Rep. David Bonior (D-Mich.), left, joined USWA members who gathered at the Des Moines local to phone bank.

STEVE POPE

## Unions Help Hurricane Floyd Victims' Ongoing Needs

Union members across the country continue to contribute tens of thousands of dollars in much-needed aid to Hurricane Floyd victims, many of whom are homeless and without basic necessities.

"Low-income working families, seniors and others still living in temporary or damaged housing are struggling to replace necessities," says Donna Dudley, director of New Life Women's Leadership Project, which assists women and children devastated by the hurricane.

To date, unions, state federations, central labor councils and members have raised more than \$90,000 for the state's storm victims through union contributions and the new working families' charity, the Union Community Fund. In January, North Carolina State AFL-CIO President James Andrews pre-

sented a check for \$17,865 to New Life, the second such Union Community Fund contribution to the organization.

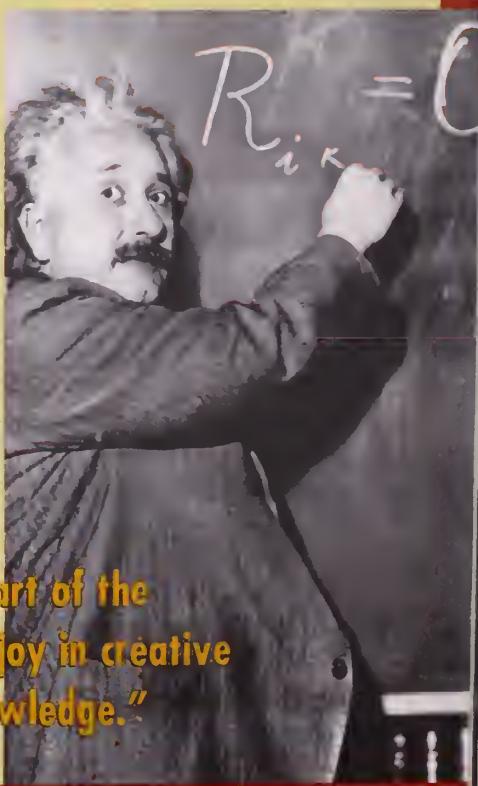
Among the North Carolina unions contributing are Machinists Local 2444 and UAW Local 5285, which each gave \$5,000 to the Salvation Army and Baby Aid, with Local 5285 adding \$1,000 for the Red Cross. Union funds helped the North Carolina Student Rural Health Coalition establish a health screening clinic and community center at the Federal Emergency Management Administration trailer camp in Rocky Mount.

"We don't want our members, or any citizen of this state or country, to think that the needs have disappeared, just because Hurricane Floyd victims aren't on the news every night," Andrews says. ☐

## Union Member of the Century

*Time* magazine's "person of the century" was a visionary scientist, philosopher—and union member.

Albert Einstein, memorialized on the cover of *Time* magazine's special millennium issue in December, was an AFT member. In fact, he was a founding member of the Princeton Federation of Teachers, Local 552. Einstein signed the local's charter application in 1938. He began teaching at the prestigious New Jersey university after fleeing Germany during the rise of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. ☐



AP PHOTO/FIE

**"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."**



**Quality@work:**  
Dr. Charles Goodman,  
a member of the  
Union of American  
Physicians and  
Dentists/AFSCME.

## Healthy Moves

With managed care and corporate greed squeezing the health care system, more doctors are turning to unions to gain a voice on the job and advocate for their patients' care.

In November, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that interns and residents in private hospitals are employees protected by federal labor laws, enabling them to form unions. Within weeks, the 450 doctors in training at Boston Medical Center joined the House Officers Association/Committee of Interns and Residents, an SEIU affiliate. They are likely the first of a potential 90,000 interns and residents nationwide to gain a voice at work with a union, says Ladi Haroona, CIR president. In December, 21 primary care doctors in outpatient clinics at Philadelphia's John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital joined the Federation of Physicians and Dentists, an AFSCME affiliate, based in Florida.

The two recent elections follow a 1999 vote by 800 Los Angeles County physicians to join the California-based UAPD, and the American Medical Association's vote to form an organization to bargain on behalf of doctors.

"This trend is driven by the corporatization of health care," says Jim Schmitz, AFSCME organizing director. "Doctors will continue to turn to unions." ☐

## The RICH VS. EVERYONE ELSE

Despite the nation's strong economic growth, the income gap between the rich and the rest of us is growing wider. According to a new report, "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," income gaps between high- and low-income families have widened in 46 states since the late 1970s. In the late 1990s, the average income for families in the top 20 percent of income distribution was \$137,500—10 times more than the income of the poorest 20 percent of families, whose average income was \$13,000.

The gap not only has widened between rich and poor, but between the rich and the middle class. In two-thirds of states, the

income disparity between the richest one-fifth of families and the bottom fifth grew between the late 1980s and the late 1990s. Meanwhile, the gap between the wealthiest 20 percent and the middle class (the middle 20 percent) has grown in 45 states.

"As economic growth slows, working families are likely to fall further behind," says Economic Policy Institute economist Jared Bernstein.

The report finds that in the 1990s, the average income for the wealthiest one-fifth grew by 15 percent, while the middle class saw less than a 2 percent increase—and the lowest-income families saw no growth.

To see how your state stacked up or for a full copy of the report, released Jan. 18 by the EPI and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, check their websites at [www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org) and [www.cbpp.org/1-18-00sfp-states.htm](http://www.cbpp.org/1-18-00sfp-states.htm). ☐

## SPOTLIGHT

# Union Members Carry On King's Dream

Hundreds of union and civil rights activists spent the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in King's hometown of Atlanta following his example by serving others and standing up for justice.

"During his life, Dr. King raised questions of fairness and equity for all people and asked 'How long,'" said Coalition of Black Trade Unionists President William Lucy.

"We have come to Atlanta to say 'It's been too long' and that we in the civil rights and union movements are determined to change it to 'Not long.'"

During the Jan. 14–17 celebration, members from more than 40 unions took part in community service projects that included gutting a 96,000-square-foot warehouse so it could be used as a homeless shelter, restoring a stream bank and donating and distributing food and paper products to community agencies.

Union members stood up for justice by marching in support of striking Overnite workers in Atlanta. They reached out to educate the community on the financial and political impact of the 2000 census with a town hall meeting featuring four members of Congress: Georgia Democrats John Lewis and Cynthia McKinney, Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) and Maxine Waters (D-Calif.). Another forum featuring black scholar Michael Eric Dyson and Waters focused on ways to bridge the gap between the hip-hop generation and those who struggled for civil rights.

Several Executive Council members attended the celebration, including Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, UNITE Vice President Clayola Brown, Lucy and Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger, who received the federation's top civil rights award for his actions in stressing diversity in local and national leadership and committing the union's resources to civil rights issues. The Executive Council members, including Teamsters President James P. Hoffa and AFGE President Bobby Harnage, joined AFL-CIO President John Sweeney in leading a mass march in King's honor through the streets of Atlanta on Jan. 17. ☐



STEVE SCHAEFER



Remembering MLK: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (inset) rallies a crowd in support of striking Overnite workers; TWU members join in a 100,000-strong march in Atlanta.

## Steelworkers Gain Ground in CF&I Struggle

After more than two years, locked-out Steelworkers at Oregon Steel Mills Inc.'s Pueblo, Colo., CF&I Steel subsidiary are still standing strong while making gains on several fronts.

Last fall, the 1,000 workers in the unfair labor practices dispute—who offered to return to work in 1998—mobilized working families to vote two pro-



**Solidarity:** Locked-out Steelworkers at CF&I/Oregon Steel are gaining ground in their two-year struggle.

management Pueblo City Council members out of office.

Union members also have raised questions about the quality of steel produced by the replacement workers. As a result, transportation authorities in San Francisco, Sacramento and Minneapolis approved resolutions to stop using CF&I/Oregon Steel rails. Several other cities are considering similar measures.

Teaming with consumer and community groups in San Francisco, Steelworkers helped pass an ordinance banning automatic teller machine surcharges in the city. Banking giant Wells Fargo, which continues to help finance the steelmaker's operations, could lose as much as \$20 million a year under the ban, the union says.

In December, the USWA announced the union would file suit in February against CF&I under both the federal Clean Air Act and state environmental laws.

"During inspections at CF&I, state officials found emissions from the mill were so serious that they could pose a threat to public health," says John Perquin, USWA assistant director of health, safety and environment. @

## Lifetime Achievement

Tune in to the 6th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards Sunday, March 12. During the award presentations on the only network television show honoring union members, actor Sidney Poitier will receive the SAG Lifetime Achievement Award. The show will be broadcast live on TNT at 8 p.m. EST and will immediately repeat. For more information, see [www.sagawards.org](http://www.sagawards.org). © BETTMANN/CORBIS



## IBT LEADERS BACK PROJECT RISE

Regional leaders of the Teamsters last month signed on to the union's anti-corruption initiative, pledging their support for the plan to rid the IBT of any remaining organized crime influence.

"It is incumbent upon us to take this project seriously," says George Cashman, president of Local 25 in Boston. "Let's demonstrate that we are going to run a clean union and we are committed to this program." Cashman was one of more than 200 members of the IBT's Joint Council to back Project RISE (Respect, Integrity, Strength, Ethics) during a special meeting in Chicago on Jan. 11.

The Teamsters plan to complete a study of organized crime, develop a code of conduct, establish a permanent ethics office and host a labor ethics conference within a year, IBT President James P. Hoffa says. A group of 21 members, local union leaders and international union leaders will develop the code and advise Hoffa on implementing the program.

"When I ran for office, I promised to run a clean union," Hoffa told local leaders at the meeting. "I now call on you to be our partners in fulfilling this commitment. The successful return of the Teamsters to the members of this union will require our complete attention." The union has operated under conditions imposed by a federal consent decree for the past 10 years.

The January Joint Council endorsement builds on the support the plan received from IBT's executive board in July (see *America@work*, September 1999). @

## APWU Steps Up Private-Sector Organizing

As the postal industry expands, the Postal Workers union is stepping up organizing efforts and boosting the ranks of new members. Much of the industry's growth is a result of the U.S. Postal Service's increase in subcontracting, and APWU is "following the work," strategically focusing on private-sector employees doing work once performed by APWU members. In the past year, APWU tallied seven private-sector organizing wins, including three "follow-the-work" victories at terminals owned by Mail Contractors of America, which operates 17 ter-

minals nationwide.

"We are changing to organize; we are building our union to meet the challenges of the next 10 years," says Greg Poerl, chairman of the union's private-sector organizing committee.

John Rybak, a driver for Mail Contractors of America based in Jacksonville, Fla., says the 100-member unit voted to join APWU on Jan. 12 because members wanted "a little better benefits, wages and fairness."

"We work on a tight schedule, and most work 11 or 12 hours a day," says Rybak, who drives 445 miles round trip every day between Florida and South Carolina.

Organizing to improve wages, benefits and working conditions in the private sector is critical to APWU, says Poerl, because Postal Workers are entitled to wages comparable to those in the private sector. @

# ICFTU Offers Youth Fellowships

**A**s part of its youth campaign, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions is launching Mindsplash, a program of school-to-work fellowships for unionists age 18-30 with a demonstrated track record of furthering unionism among young people. The Brussels-based ICFTU, created in 1949, is a worldwide confederation of 215 trade union centers in 145 countries.

Participants will enhance their education through short-term placements with ICFTU-affiliated trade unions that may

include short residential college courses, visiting union offices in other countries and foreign exchanges with other young trade unionists.

In the face of an estimated 60 million unemployed young people worldwide, the ICFTU's "The Future Starts Now—Join a Union" campaign, which includes Mindsplash, focuses on organizing, quality education and job creation for younger workers, says Marieke Koning, youth coordinator for the organization's Equality and Youth Department.

The first awards likely will be made in late spring.

For more information, click on the ICFTU's youth webpage at <http://www.icftu.org/english/equality>Youth/eyouth/index.html>. @

## Public Pleased with Public Employees

**A**n extensive new survey shows that the public is as satisfied with the services from 29 federal agencies as with service from private-sector companies.

"These results demonstrate the high-quality, cost-effectiveness of government workers. The mad dash by Congress to privatize more government services must be questioned anew," says AFGE President Bobby Harnage.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index was developed by the University of Michigan Business School, the American Society for Quality and the consulting firm Arthur Andersen. On a scale of 1 to 100, the average score for private-sector services was 72—and for public service, the average was 69.

"Finally someone is listening to us," says Jane Nygaard, a registered nurse at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Rating highest were the U.S. Mint of the Department of the Treasury (86) and the Social Security Administration (82). The survey also scored customers' expectations. For example, the Veterans Administration received a 71 score for the level of service customers expected, but the agency scored an 83 on services delivered. @



Public praise: AFGE President Bobby Harnage says a new survey demonstrates that government employees are "high quality."

## OUT FRONT

**T**wo headlines on the same day last month should have captured the attention of every union member, activist and leader.

We read that in 1999, our unions grew by more than 265,000—the largest single-year increase in more than two decades. The percentage of U.S. workers belonging to unions remained steady at 13.9 percent—meaning the long trend of declining union density has slowed, if not stopped.

Altogether, 600,000 more workers won the right to a voice at work and the opportunity for a better life through union membership in 1999 than the previous year. Great news!

But the same day, we also read that the income gap between America's rich and the rest of us has grown still larger. As the economy continues its unprecedented boom, the rich are getting richer—and richer. The poor and middle class are stuck behind. And as the feature articles in this issue show, the income gap is echoed in time and parenting pressure as well as housing affordability. Health and retirement insecurity squeeze working families even further.

During the 1990s, the wealthiest one-fifth of families saw their average income grow by a whopping 15 percent, according to "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Economic Policy Institute. But middle-class families got a very modest 2 percent boost during that time—and the families with the lowest incomes had no income growth at all.

What do these two headlines tell us? That America's working families need unions as much today as ever, and that to reach more of them with the union advantage we have to work far harder at organizing.

We know that much of the growth in union membership was due to exemplary efforts by unions that waged more campaigns, larger campaigns and smarter campaigns. Our efforts to "change to organize" are working, and we're seeing the effects.

But we also know that to grow as a movement, we've got to organize 1 million new workers each year. As big as our organizing was in 1999, we've got to help 400,000 more workers gain a voice at work in 2000 to turn our trend lines up.

In January 2010, none of us wants to read an update of the "Pulling Apart" study showing the gap between rich and poor has widened even further.

We want to see one headline that says, "Income Gap Disappears as Majority of Working People Join Unions." @

# Organizing for Economic Justice

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# How Can I Take Care

## Strategies for Creating a Family-Friendly Workplace

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

**Joseph Bryant had been a service technician for Bell Atlantic in Baltimore for 24 years when the company cut its workforce by 15 percent and imposed a new, mandatory overtime policy.**

A single father, he tried to adjust by volunteering for overtime assignments on weekends when his former wife could look after their children. Weekday overtime was difficult because he had to pick his kids up from school by 6 p.m.

But Bell Atlantic managers refused to compromise. "At the beginning, a lot of

the supervisors were willing to work with me," he recalls. "But then they came up with the mandatory overtime policy, and that's when things went haywire." Finally, Bryant had no choice but to leave work in time to pick up the children—and the company fired him. Through his union, Communications Workers Local 2101,

Bryant got his job back after a successful arbitration.

Yet the conflict Bryant experienced in trying to be a good worker and responsible parent was becoming more common among telecommunications workers across the country. So when it came time to bargain new contracts with several companies in 1998, CWA members mobilized with rallies and a massive member education campaign, calling attention to the havoc abusive mandatory overtime policies created in balancing work and family life. At US West, members even went on strike, garnering widespread public support.

**Family-friendly: X-ray technician and SEIU District 1199 member Paulette Forbes and her kids—Keshawn, Melissa and Carl Jr.—benefit from her union's efforts to expand access to child care.**



JIM MANN

# of My Family ...and Do My Job?

As a result, CWA negotiated contracts that limit mandatory overtime. And CWA is among an increasing number of unions bargaining for such benefits as flexible work schedules, child care and other family-friendly benefits as workers struggle to balance workplace and family responsibilities. Complementing the bargaining strategy are state legislative initiatives to give legal backing to such policies as equal pay for women and paid family leave. "Often, people look at balancing work and family as a personal problem," says Debby King, executive director of the 1199/Employment Training and Job Security Program in New York. "There needs to be more discussion about the institutional support people need." Campaigns centered on work-family issues, she notes, "are a major way of involving members and building a stronger movement."

"The fight for fair pay is crucial," says AFSCME President Gerald McEntee. "But it's more than a living wage. Workers also need the time off and the benefits to take care of their loved ones—their children, their spouses and partners, their parents. That's why we're fighting for paid leave, negotiating for child care centers and pushing for higher-quality, more affordable child care."

Never have so many unions been working in so many ways and places to make workplaces more family-friendly. Current federal laws—passed in large part through the efforts of the union movement—protect women from pay discrimination based on gender and guarantee many workers three months' unpaid leave for the birth or adoption of a child or in case of a serious illness. In contract negotiations and legislative efforts, union activists and their allies build on those laws.



## Family and Medical Leave

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) grants workers unpaid time off when they give birth, adopt a child or need to take care of an ill family member or recover from their own illness. But the law only applies to companies that employ 50 or more people—leaving out nearly half of the workforce. In Maine, union members began meeting with allies from religious congregations and advocates for women and low-income workers in the mid-1990s. The

**Work and family: Working parents such as UAW Local 1700 member Tammy Skelly, with sons Trevor and Michael, look forward to a UAW initiative to provide child care for Detroit-area families.**

coalition built support in the legislature with letters and phone calls to state lawmakers, getting the word out to union members through mail, presentations at union meetings and phone trees. Their efforts paid off when the Maine legislature passed a law,

**Bargaining:** UAW President Stephen Yokich and the Big Three automakers announce a \$6 million joint child care project, which Yokich credits "to the collective bargaining process."



REBECCA COOK

effective in May 1999, extending the benefits of FMLA to workers at companies with 15 or more employees. "Sometimes those groups can persuade legislators we can't, and vice versa," says Ned McCann, legislative director for the Maine AFL-CIO. "We saw this not just as a union issue."

### Paid family leave

To enable more workers to take family leave, unions, in coalition with the National Partnership for Women and Families, are campaigning for paid family leave, focusing their efforts on state legislatures. In Massachusetts, activists are looking at ways to tap into a surplus in the state's unemployment insurance fund and extend those benefits to employees taking family and medical leave. Another bill would create a family and employment security trust fund.

"There are few, if any, families who can afford to take off 12 weeks without pay," says Kathleen Casavant, secretary-treasurer of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. "We'd like to provide them some financial support so they can be with their families when they need to be." A 1996 evaluation of FMLA by the Family Leave Commission found that the nearly two-thirds of employees who didn't take the family or medical leave they needed cited lost wages as the reason. In November, President Clinton proposed allowing states to experiment with using

their own unemployment insurance systems to implement paid parental leave.

In California, Gov. Gray Davis signed a bill in October, at the urging of the California Federation of Labor, that mandates a study of extending disability insurance to workers taking family leave and increases leave benefits.

### Equal pay

Like unpaid family leave, equal pay for women also is protected by federal law. And yet, the average family still loses more than \$4,000 a year because of unequal pay, according to a recent study by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Union members are working at the state level to pass equal pay laws, and succeeded in introducing 29 state equal pay bills last year similar to an Indiana bill to outlaw pay discrimination based on several factors, including gender, which passed the state House last spring despite a full-throttle campaign by Big Business.

And in Illinois, the state House passed a similar equal pay bill with one abstention on the same day the state federation held its first-ever Working Women's Day of Action. To build support for the bill in the state Senate, the state federation sent union members a survey soliciting input on its legislative agenda—and has received more than 8,000 responses. Union members expressing an

interest in equal pay will form the core of a grassroots activist network.

"Equal pay is not just a working women's issue, it's a family issue," says Catherine Shannon, political director of the Illinois state federation. "If we effectively ended pay discrimination against women, family incomes would rise."

### Child care

Child care is another key issue for working families. In Washington, SEIU District 925 and other unions in the Seattle Union Now coalition sought to address child care workers' inadequate wages—low pay that often leads to high turnover and diminished quality of care. Working with the community—including parents with children in child care centers—SUN launched a postcard and call-in campaign aimed at state lawmakers. Its efforts yielded a pay boost for child care workers, and the governor allocated \$4 million for a two-year project creating a wage ladder based on experience, education and responsibility.

In New York, a coalition of unions and the state AFL-CIO successfully lobbied state leaders for more child care subsidies and won the largest single-year increase in the state's history in 1999. The \$177 million will result in child care for 13,000 more children

**Day of action:** Union members participate in the Illinois Working Women's Day of Action rally at the state capitol as part of a successful effort to win passage of an equal pay bill in the state house.



CHRIS STEVENS

and construction of child care centers. Union leaders started laying the groundwork for the victory several years ago, when members of a union coalition began working with local child care programs to make them more worker-friendly—such as ending summer camp at 6 p.m., instead of 4 p.m. “We’re trying to work on having society recognize that we want to be excellent workers and excellent family members as well,” District 1199’s King says. “If public officials know that unions think this is an important issue, they pay attention.”

UAW Local 1413 member Leslie Bozeman takes her 4½-year-old daughter, Anna, to the UAW-DaimlerChrysler Child Development Center in Huntsville, Ala. “It is so close and accessible I can go check on her any time,” says Bozeman, who helps assemble electronic boards. “The center teaches the children foreign languages, gymnastics and computers. I feel it is preparing her for kindergarten and beyond.” Asked what she would do for child care if the center was not available, Bozeman thinks for a moment and says, “I have no idea. It is such a struggle finding a place to leave your child that you are comfortable with. I feel as comfortable leaving her there as I would with a family member.”



HERE LOCAL 2

**A matter of respect: Members of HERE Local 2 sign up for child and elder care benefits.**

### Bargaining for working families

More unions are making work and family issues a high priority during negotiations. Surveys of bargaining unit members prior to negotiations now frequently include questions about child care, paid family leave and related issues. “It is important to look at who your members are and what they want,” says Netsy Firestein, executive director of the Labor Project for Working Families, a Berkeley, Calif.-based group that maintains a database of family-friendly contract provisions. Firestein advises union leaders to “keep in mind the range of possibilities,” from child care referral services to on-site child care centers.

In April 1999, the UAW and the Big Three automakers created the Alliance for Children and Working Families, which will fund family service projects in Detroit over the next four years, including training for child care providers, summer camp, after-school programs, emergency in-home day care and back-up child care. “We’ve brought the issue of child care to the table a number of

times,” says UAW President Stephen Yokich. “This is how the process is supposed to work. We identify our problems and concerns, the company identifies their issues and together we work to find solutions. The real credit here goes to the collective bargaining process.” The funding is only the latest in family-friendly benefits the UAW has negotiated over the years, including model child care centers in conjunction with each of the Big Three automakers.

A group of AFSCME District 31 members negotiated a contract that allows new parents to work at home one day a week until their babies turn 1 year old. Barbara Nicosia, president of the union representing circuit court clerks in Cook County, Illinois, says her union doesn’t wait until the contract is about to expire to bargain for family benefits. “We work on these things in between. They are major issues in our local.” The strategy also helps build the union in the long term, Nicosia says, because with “a more productive unit, you have a stronger hand when you bargain for wages.”



Union member benefits: Leslie Bozeman's daughter, Anna, is enrolled in the child care center run by UAW and Daimler-Chrysler in Alabama.



MARC BONDARENKO/LIAISON AGENCY

Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 2 in San Francisco negotiated a child and elder care fund and a flexible paid-time-off policy in 1994. "They were 'family-friendly' issues, but also respect issues," says Lisa Jaicks, plan coordinator. Before bargaining, union leaders spearheaded meetings to enable workers with similar duties to meet and discuss issues of common concern—housekeepers met with housekeepers, for instance. "It became obvious that people were worried about their children and their parents, and we knew that the employers were concerned about absenteeism and distractions at work," Jaicks recalls. She led the labor-management committee that designed the fund, which now has grown to \$2.5 million. The hotels began by contributing 5 cents per scheduled hour per employee, a figure that is now 15 cents and will climb to 20 cents in five years. Members apply for the funds, which can be as much as \$225 per

month for child care. A unique aspect of the bargaining was that members of the labor-management committee had to grapple with their own efforts at balancing work and family. So union members and managers, usually on opposite sides of conflicts, found common ground as they shared stories of caring for young children or aged parents.

The program offers key support to such workers as Eva Brandon, a busperson at the Grand Hyatt. Two years ago, Brandon struggled to patch together child care for her son, Christopher, often scrambling for babysitters. "I used to take him here and there," she says. Now, he attends the child care center at his school, because the union reimburses her for the \$135 monthly fee. "My son is very happy there. I am so happy about it," Brandon says.

Like Brandon, CWA member Bryant now is able to balance work and family as a result of his union's efforts. He says his

## Work and Family Websites

The Coalition of Labor Union Women works on organizing, politics and legislation as well as increasing women's participation in their unions: 202-466-4610; [www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org).

The Labor Project for Working Families, a nonprofit group that works with unions to develop workplace policies for families, offers a website that includes an online newsletter, database of contract language on child care, elder care, family leave and more: 510-643-6814; <http://laborproject.berkeley.edu>.

The National Partnership for Women and Families features information about the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, as well as constantly updated information about state actions on paid family leave: 202-986-2600; [www.nationalpartnership.org](http://www.nationalpartnership.org).

The AFL-CIO's Working Women website includes fact sheets on bargaining for alternative work schedules, family leave, child care and elder care, as well as an equal pay calculator that enables working women to see how much the income gap will cost them over their lifetimes: 202-637-5064; [www.aflcio.org/women](http://www.aflcio.org/women).

The AFL-CIO Caring for Our Elders website includes financial resources and links to help online for families caring for their elders: [www.aflcio.org/elders](http://www.aflcio.org/elders).

AFT offers the online guide "Bargaining for Family Issues": [www.aft.org/human/civilhuman/download/humanrights/family.pdf](http://www.aft.org/human/civilhuman/download/humanrights/family.pdf). ☐

struggle against mandatory overtime convinced him that the union movement's effort on work-family issues "are not about being male or about being female."

"It's about being a parent." ☐

For more information on any of the examples in this story, contact Netsy Firestein, Labor Project for Working Families, 510-643-6814. To share your experiences, contact Laureen Lazarovici at: 202-637-5037; e-mail: [llazarov@aflcio.org](mailto:llazarov@aflcio.org).

# Toward a Family-Friendly Economy

Recent economic data reveal a mixed reality for American workers. On one hand, our economy has been expanding for eight years. On the other, the bottom 60 percent of all Americans have not seen their economic circumstances change substantially in the last decade.

On one hand, we have the lowest unemployment rates in a generation—a 4.1 percent rate that translates into 7.9 percent for African Americans and more than 25 percent for inner-city youths. On the other hand, layoffs in 1998 were higher than at any other time in the decade.

Workers who have "good jobs" have health insurance and other benefits, while 43 million Americans, many of whom work in temporary and part-time jobs, must cobble together a living wage and a safety net. Workers with good jobs often work for "family-friendly" companies, such as those highlighted in *Working Mother's* October 1999 issue, which offer adoption assistance, child care, flexibility and leave for new parents. In contrast, parental status has no currency in the low-wage, part-time world. The 12 million workers who earn the minimum wage lose pay if they stay home to care for a sick child, and often get health care in hospital emergency rooms.

From a policy perspective, we ought to pay attention to the benefits the private sector now is generating for some workers, since these benefits speak to the kind of supports that many working families need.

First and foremost, working families need fair pay. Legislation that increases the minimum wage directly affects 12 million workers, including at least 1 million single mothers who support households.

Second, working families need access to health care, transportation and affordable

housing. They need safety nets to protect them from the downside of our volatile economy. In an expanding economy, it is disgraceful to find millions of homeless and hungry families whose status might have been improved by now-defunct social programs.

A family-friendly economy would value those who work with children and would generate enough affordable child care to address the needs of working parents. Family-friendly companies provide on-site child care, but a family-friendly society would have community child care and supervised play environments for those who don't work for such companies. Too many working parents worry about school-aged children, because the cost of after-school care often is too high. Meanwhile, urban recreation centers have suffered budget cuts and offer fewer services than they did a generation ago. The hours of neighborhood municipal libraries have been cut in the face of budget crunches. Yet libraries provide a haven for children when school is out.

Increasingly, working parents deal not only with child care, but also with elder care. Only the most progressive corporations address this issue, and our society has yet to consider ways to deal with the elderly, except as a private matter.

More than anything, working parents say they need more time to juggle their family



DAVID LEE WAITE

BY JULIANNE MALVEAUX

and work commitments, to handle their commutes and their errands, to meet with their child's teachers and with their parent's doctors and to shop for food and clothing. While there's no

"time fairy" to extend a 24-hour day into a 25-hour one (and no "stamina fairy" to ensure that extra hour won't be used just sleeping), there are ways our society can deal structurally with the time crunch that working families experience. If grocery stores can be open 24-7, what about libraries and post offices? At minimum, the provision of services should be more evenly spread around the clock so that the 8-5 worker is not trying to segue her work life into an 8-5 teacher's day and an 8-5 doctor's schedule.

What does it take to develop a family-friendly economy? First, we need to view workers as having dual roles, both as productivity centers and as family members. Then, we need to structure our society to support both of those roles. For too long, there has been emphasis on the bottom line, and not enough on the environment from which people come to contribute to a bottom line. If we understand that the two are intertwined, we will have the basis to move toward a family-friendly economy. @

Dr. Julianne Malveaux holds a Ph.D. in economics and is a nationally syndicated columnist.



Getting Set for

# Working Women's Conference 2000

Chicago  
March 11-12

BY MIKE HALL

**"Are you able to save money? How much is day care costing you? Are you single, or working to subsidize your family's income? Is there a pension plan on the job?"**

These are the questions Ernestine Wiggins, a member of Local 800 of the City Union of Baltimore/AFT, poses to co-workers when she describes the reasons she's going to Chicago next month for the AFL-CIO Working Women's Conference 2000.

"If these are questions that concern you, you need to be part of this," explains the clinic manager for the Young People's Health Connection of the Baltimore Department of Public Health. When 5,000 working women from around the country gather for the March 11-12 conference, it will be "a great opportunity for women in the union movement to get together and talk about how to mobilize and how to organize new workers," says Stephanie Walker, an organizer for the central labor council in Rochester, N.Y. "It's going to help rank-and-file members, the unorganized trying to win a voice at work and union leaders."

Walker and a dozen other area working women—including those struggling for a first contract at Nortonian Nursing Home—are among dozens of women planning to attend the conference to help set a working women's agenda for 2000 and beyond. The conference will focus on three major areas: Organizing: A Voice at Work; A Voice in the 2000 Elections; and Women In the World Economy.

#### **Building a grassroots foundation**

In 1997, the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department launched a major new initiative to bring working women together to solve the problems they face juggling work and family. More than 1,700 working women gathered in Washington, D.C., at the Working Women Working Together conference to take a look at the results of the AFL-CIO Ask a Working Woman nationwide survey. The more than 50,000 women who responded

to the survey said their top concerns were equal pay, child care and balancing the demands of work and family.

"I was relatively new to the union movement and I came back from that conference with a better sense of confidence and feeling more comfortable in my role after hearing other women's stories," says Sara Rogers, executive vice president of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO. "I felt more like part of a team."

The 1997 conference helped build a foundation of activist women. Women mobilized around Working Women Vote '98 and the drive for equal pay legislation on the state and federal levels. Their actions were among those forcing politicians to focus on a Working Families Agenda, and they developed strategies to show other working women how unions can help them address work and family issues.

In 1999, the Working Women's Department followed up with a national series of Ask a Working Woman forums in which hundreds of working women in small groups shared their stories and concerns with other working women, lawmakers and policy makers. The final results of the survey will be released in March, just prior to the Working Women 2000 conference.

At one of those forums in Buffalo, N.Y., Shrica Salter, a 26-year-old single mother and housekeeper at the Radisson Airport Hotel, told First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and 600 others that she was worried that Social Security privatization schemes could put her retirement at risk. Even with her recent raise under her Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees contract, "It's very hard to put away anything. I feel it [Social Security] shouldn't go anywhere."

At a Las Vegas forum, Teamsters member Josephine Thomas, a switchboard operator at the Sahara Casino and Hotel, described the difficulty she faced in finding after-school care for her five children, ages 7-15. She works different shifts and wants to make sure the children "are safe, getting help with their homework and developing in a fun and productive learning environment."

The forums were coupled with a new survey that asked women to select their top three priorities from among 13 possible ways their lives could be improved at work. The preliminary results of the second Ask a Working Woman survey show that equal pay, quality child care, a secure retirement and affordable health care remain top concerns.

**It's very hard to put away anything. I feel it [Social Security] shouldn't go anywhere.**

*—Shrica Salter, 26-year-old single mother and housekeeper at the Buffalo Radisson Airport Hotel*

Other key issues include more control over work hours, elder care, respect on the job, ending discrimination and sexual harassment and making workplaces safer.

To help set a Working Families Agenda, respondents were asked which laws should be strengthened or enacted to improve their lives as working women. The current Ask a Working Woman survey, coupled with more than a dozen Ask a Working Woman forums in the past year, will help refine how working families evaluate candidates in this fall's election.

### **Working Women Vote**

Women voters will play a key role in deciding whether working families win back control of the U.S. Congress and state and local offices and elect a president who supports a Working Families' Agenda. In the 1998 congressional races between working family candidates and anti-worker, business-backed office-seekers, union women cast votes for working family candidates by a 74-26 percent margin, according to Peter D. Hart Research Associates. With 5.5 million women in AFL-CIO-affiliated unions, that's a lot of clout at the ballot box.

Women who attend the Chicago conference will see "how important working family issues will be in the 2000 elections and why it's so vital they participate in the process to get union candidates elected, and to help their union members know what's at stake and to help mobilize them," says Walker.

At the Working Women's Conference 2000, women will discuss strategies for successful political action in workshops that focus on the nuts and bolts of political mobilization. Participants will learn how to run a campaign, with detailed sessions on phone banks, volunteer recruitment and worksite education. Other sessions will examine managing effective legislative and ballot initiative campaigns.

Wiggins recalls that in 1997, while most conference participants were union women, many nonunion women also attended. "We were able to see what happens outside our own umbrella. I went home wanting to educate other women in my union—who feel

protected and comfortable with a union contract—about what happens to people outside our comfort zone and to reach out to those women struggling to organize," she says.

In fact, women have made up large percentages of newly organized workers, including the 75,000 home health care workers in California with SEIU, more than 37,000 school teachers in Puerto Rico with AFT and 5,000 textile workers in North Carolina who became UNITE members. Women who have a voice at work through union contracts earn 39 percent more than their nonunion counterparts, are more likely to have equal pay, health care, pensions and workplace policies that offer flexibility to care for their children and play greater roles



JAMES MCCOY/BUFFALO NEWS

**Speaking out: Working women join Hillary Rodham Clinton in one of a series of nationwide Ask a Working Woman forums.**

in their communities, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Conference workshops will touch on these subjects and cover basic elements of organizing, as well as strategies across industries.

Most working women think a union will make their lives better. In 1999, 57 percent of women younger than 40 surveyed by Hart said they would join a union if they could. They recognized that by joining together in unions, working women can help close the gaps created by discrimination, balance demands of work and family and have a way to be heard on the job.

*Registration is on-going as space is available. There will be no on-site registration. For more information, contact Betty Brawley in the Working Women's Department: 202-637-5239; fax: 202-508-6902; or e-mail: [bbrawley@afcio.org](mailto:bbrawley@afcio.org).*

# America's Workers Can't Pay the Rent

**Despite the growing economy,  
working families face a shortage  
of affordable housing.**

BY PETER DREIER

Hector Cuatepotzo, a waiter at the upscale Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica, Calif., and an active member of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees in Los Angeles, lives in a tiny, one-bedroom apartment with his wife, Maria, 6-year-old daughter, Ashley, and infant son, Bryan. All four sleep in the same small room, with Bryan's crib nestled in one corner and Ashley's bed in another.

JIM RUYIAN





Cuatepotzo earns about \$20,000 a year in salary and tips (equal to about \$10 an hour, almost twice the minimum wage). But with \$625 a month in rent and another \$80 monthly for gas and electricity, the Cuatepotzos spend more than 40 percent of their income for housing. Cuatepotzo works from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and travels 40 miles round-trip to work each day because rents in buildings closer to his job are even higher.

Since Maria took time off from her job in a restaurant to have the baby, they have received several eviction notices for late payment. Cuatepotzo is thinking about getting a second job, but that would mean rarely seeing his children.

Cuatepotzo, who has worked at the Miramar since arriving from Mexico 10 years ago, would like to own his own home someday. "It's my dream," he says. But he can't imagine how he'll ever get there when his family lives paycheck to paycheck.

### **Housing costs increase faster than pay**

Like a growing number of American workers, including union members, Cuatepotzo can't afford to pay the rent. Despite the strong economy and low unemployment rate, working families face a severe shortage of affordable housing. Housing costs, already the biggest item in working families' budgets, are spiraling faster than pay increases, especially for low-wage workers.

In fact, according to a new study, a family living on the minimum wage cannot afford a standard apartment in any major city. The report, prepared by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, compared the federal minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour) with rents around the nation. In 70 metropolitan areas, minimum-wage workers would have to work more than 100 hours a week to afford local market rents in their

**Locked out: Despite working full-time, Hector Cuatepotzo finds the door is closed to his dream of buying a home for his family.**

area. Some 59 percent of renters—4.4 million households—spend more than half of their income just to keep a roof over their heads.

The housing shortage is illustrated by the gap between the number of low-income households and the number of rental units affordable to the poor. In 1970, America had a surplus of 300,000 affordable units, compared with a shortage of 4.4 million units in 1995. The Cuatepotzos are eligible for federal housing subsidies, but the wait for help is five or more years.

While union families have a higher rate of home ownership—75 percent own their own homes, compared with

the national average of 67 percent—today's younger union workers are having a much tougher time. Although the nation's overall home ownership rate is now at an all-time high, many of those homeowners are older than 55 and purchased their homes when housing was more affordable. According to a 1999 U.S. Census Bureau study, among every age group younger than 55, the home ownership rate actually has declined since the late 1970s.

Working families that pay too much for housing also have less disposable income to spend on other goods and services—a situation that undermines the economic health of local businesses and neighborhoods, and also makes it more likely they'll be without basic necessities, such as food and medicine.

### **What can unions do to improve access to housing?**

Unions historically have been at the forefront of the fight for decent housing. As early as the 1920s, some unions sponsored well-designed housing developments for their members. During the Depression and postwar years, the union movement played a key role in lobbying for federal housing programs to increase low-cost housing for the poor and to provide mortgage insurance to help families purchase their own homes. Since 1981, the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust has invested more than \$3 billion in union pension funds in a variety of



housing developments around the country. In 1999, HIT's investments helped create more than 4,500 new units.

But in the past two decades, federal housing assistance has plummeted. The federal budget for low-income housing was slashed from \$54 billion (in today's dollars) in 1980 to about \$20 billion today. Only one-quarter of the nation's 16 million low-income families receive any housing subsidies.

Instead, the nation's most expensive housing subsidy program primarily benefits the wealthy. The federal tax system allows homeowners to deduct mortgage interest and property taxes from their income taxes. Three-quarters of the wealthiest families received tax breaks averaging more than \$8,000 per family in 1998, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation in Congress. In 1998, tax cuts for the wealthy cost Uncle Sam more than \$63 billion in lost revenues—about three times the size of the entire U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development budget. Poor homeowners don't qualify for mortgage deductions and poor renters are shut out altogether.

Today, unions can continue to play an important role in reshaping the nation's housing policies and improving the housing standards of America's working families.

- Use collective bargaining as a tool to set up union-sponsored housing trust funds. In the late 1980s, Boston's HERE Local 26 surveyed its members and found their biggest problem was the city's skyrocketing housing costs.

In its next contract negotiations, the union won a "housing trust fund" to which employers would contribute 7 cents per hour for members' housing needs. When the hotel owners' association claimed the union exceeded its legal authority, Local 26 led a successful campaign to amend the nation's labor laws in 1990 to allow unions and employers to provide housing assistance to workers through collective bargaining agreements.

- Join with community groups. Unions can work with local housing groups to sponsor home ownership counseling and tenants' rights workshops for their members

and potential members, educating them about such issues as protections against unfair evictions.

In the Los Angeles area, for example, HERE Local 814 is working closely with the Community Corporation of Santa Monica, a local nonprofit community development group. After surveying union members, the partnership created a referral system for members to get home ownership assistance and a network to educate members about their tenants' rights. When Cuatepotzo received an eviction notice, HERE and CCSM provided legal advice.

Local unions also could help neighborhood-based community development corporations, which specialize in creating affordable housing, to work with union contractors.

- Utilize and expand local laws. Several cities—including Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and Boston—have adopted "linked deposit" policies that include issuing a report card on local banks identifying lenders which do and don't invest in city neighborhoods and don't provide mortgages for working families.

Unions can piggy-back on these programs to ensure the banks in which they deposit union funds are making loans to community members.

Some cities, including Boston and San Francisco, exact a "linkage" fee on large commercial developers that is deposited into a housing trust fund to guarantee that the city's commercial prosperity is shared by working-class and low-income families. Unions can join housing groups to push for such municipal housing trust funds to expand the inventory of affordable housing.

- Take state and federal action. At the state level, unions can help pass affordable housing bond measures and pinpoint state funds for affordable housing programs. In

California, for example, unions are behind two bond measures on the November 2000 ballot that would produce tens of thousands of apartments and homes in the next few years, making it possible for more families with modest incomes to afford housing.

At the federal level, unions can lobby to expand the Department of Housing and Urban Development budget to provide funding for construction of affordable housing and for more Section

8 housing vouchers. In December, for example, President Clinton proposed adding 60,000 more vouchers—a positive step, but still not sufficient to help the millions of families that need them.

Unions also can push to enact a progressive home ownership tax credit that would target tax breaks to working-class families who need help with down payments and monthly mortgage payments.

Another strategy is to strengthen the federal Community Reinvestment Act (which outlaws discrimination in mortgage lending) to ensure that banks making loans to corporations that use sweatshops or export good jobs would get lower CRA rankings from federal regulators. The regulators then could reject banks' applications to merge or open overseas branches.

In 1948, President Truman made addressing the postwar housing shortage a key part of his election campaign. He declared that Republicans should update their slogan of "two cars in every garage" to "two families in every garage."

"How can we expect to sell democracy to Europe until we prove that, within the democratic system, we can provide decent homes for our people?" he asked.

Once again, the nation has a serious housing crisis. But we can't expect Truman's type of leadership without well-organized grassroots efforts. Unions have an important stake in rebuilding a political coalition that can fight for decent housing for all Americans. ☐

*Peter Dreier is a professor of politics and director of the public policy program at Occidental College in California.*



## **Today, unions can continue to play an important role in reshaping the nation's housing policies and improving the housing standards of America's working families.**

HEART OF  
THE  
MOVEMENT

# Ready to Rock 'n' Roll in PUERTO RICO



Sara Ortiz is a classroom assistant at Roberto Clemente Middle School in Philadelphia. She is a building representative in her union and represents paraprofessionals on the executive board of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, an AFT affiliate.

In February 1998, as the result of a grassroots union mobilization effort, Puerto Rico's lawmakers passed a law allowing the island's nearly 150,000 public employees to unionize. They set up a two-stage process by which workers first would vote on whether to have a union, and then vote on which union they wanted. A native Puerto Rican, Ortiz participated in both election drives, in which nearly 40,000 teachers signed up with AFT and thousands more workers are joining AFSCME, SEIU, UAW, UFCW and Fire Fighters.

**W**hen I heard about this organizing drive a few years ago, I decided I wanted to be part of this history-making effort. I met with leaders from AFT here and from Puerto Rico and I kept telling them, 'Don't forget me.' Then, I got a call saying, 'We're ready to rock 'n' roll.' Being Puerto Rican and a union member, it struck a chord with me. I'd organized here [on the U.S. mainland] before, helping paraprofessionals organize in Denver and teachers in San Antonio, so I knew I could do a good job there.

"I went to Puerto Rico in January [1999] and spent a few days getting training on the new law. Then I got a map and a car and went to the east coast of the island. Traveling to Humacao from San Juan took two hours every day. We spent our days informing workers that there are better solutions to their problems. The teachers work under such horrible circumstances. There are schools with no running water. Teachers don't have books or materials. The salaries are horrendous. There's a lot of political

patronage. We were getting cards signed.

"I came back in April, and in May we had the election. The government and the Department of Education did all these strange things. They wouldn't let people vote by mail. They made people vote at school on 10 different days. We got up at 3 a.m. to set up tents that would be used as voting booths. We went from town to town doing that. They made it really hard, but we still accomplished a 'yes' vote.

"When I came back in July [for the vote on which union to choose], I got another three days of training, a car with a tank full of gas and a map. I helped locals get active and elect leaders in Aguas Buena and Caguas. I helped building representatives and working committees get the vote out. All they needed was to have someone they could talk to and tell them that we all were going to make a difference. Listening to the people, one on one, is what made the difference. I took copies of my contract with me and showed them what a difference it makes in my life.

**"Listening to the people, one on one, is what made the difference."**

"I was coming out of a town, Arecibo, one day and there was a flash flood warning, so I decided to try to go through the mountain roads, thinking it would be safer. My car got swept into a creek and I had to swim out. It was scary! Luckily, a couple living nearby led me out of it. I thought I was going to die. But, if I had to do it over again, I would. It is so important. I had a chance to be part of a history-making campaign. I gave a little, but I gained so much more.

"When I was growing up, my father was a member of Bakery and Confectionery Workers Local 6 and my mother was a member of Teamsters Local 150. I come from a strong union family. I walked picket lines as a child. In 1970, there was a strike at my first job and I refused to cross the picket line. I learned that we need to fight for what we believe in. I keep in touch with all the people in Puerto Rico. I want to go back if they ever need more help." ☐

# COUNTING ON EVERY WORKING FAMILY

When the census form comes in the mail in March, don't throw it away. It could mean the difference between good schools and bad schools in your community, or whether neighborhood medical clinics remain open.

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau sends questionnaires to each household in the country. Individual "counters" make follow-up visits to those who did not respond. The federal government uses the census figures to determine where \$200 billion in federal dollars will be spent for the next 10 years on education, jobs, transportation, health care, housing and benefits for seniors and veterans. The Census Bureau counts every person in the country, whether they are citizens or not, and the information for each person or family is kept confidential.

If families don't fill out the forms, their communities lose out on their fair share of federal funds distributed each year—money that workers contribute through taxes and should get back in needed services. The census also is key to working families' political strength: Census figures determine how many representatives each state has in Congress.

AFT Local 1385 member William Davis sees the connection between an accurate census count and good schools every school day, when he teaches classes that each include up to 45 students at the Rhodes Middle School in San Antonio. He's one of the lucky ones: Some teachers have no classroom and must teach in the auditorium or cafeteria.

Many of the families whose children are in Davis's class did not fill out the census forms they received in 1990. In San Antonio, 16,679 children younger than 18 were missed in the census, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Had they been counted, the city could have received funding for 29 more schools that would have employed 1,042 additional teachers. Overall, Texas lost more than \$93.4 million in federal funding, according to the General Accounting Office. Nation-

wide, the 1990 census missed 4.5 million people, including more than 2 million children.

A lack of funding also means that Davis's students, all Latinos, cannot take textbooks

home, because the school system does not have enough money for books.

Because many Latinos, African Americans and other minorities distrust government and government workers who come to their door, such as census counters, they don't respond to surveys, says Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), a coalition of civil rights groups that includes the AFL-CIO.

To get the word out, Davis and his wife, Vivianna, are distributing fliers at Rhodes, urging families to fill out the forms. "I know dozens of these families were not counted in 1990, and it really is hurting them," Davis says.

To ensure that everyone is counted, the Census Bureau created a more accurate counting method, called sampling. The Census Bureau proposed counting 90 percent of the people in an area through mailings and one-on-one contact. The bureau then would extrapolate the characteristics of the remaining 10 percent.

But anti-worker members of Congress have demanded that every person be counted directly, either through a returned questionnaire or a personal interview. The Census Bureau and statistical experts say it is impossible to physically count every person in the country

without missing millions, especially the poor and minorities.

Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that current law requires direct counting

methods for the apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives. But it allowed state and local officials to use sampling to redistrict state legislative districts, as well as such local jurisdictions as school boards and city councils. In response, state legislatures in Arizona, Colorado, Kansas and Alaska recently voted to limit the use of sampling results in redistricting.

"Redistricting affects all of us," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. "By returning the census form and pushing state officials to allow sampling, an individual can participate in the redistricting process and help build the power of working families." ☐

— James B. Parks



## Get the Word Out

Here's how you and your local union can make sure union members take part in the 2000 census

- Distribute worksite fliers. Visit the AFL-CIO census website, which includes a downloadable flier, at [www.aflcio.org/census/flier.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/census/flier.pdf).
- Educate members. The federation's Civil and Human Rights Department has prepared fact sheets in English and Spanish explaining how the 1990 undercount affected states. For copies call 202-637-5270.
- Urge members to get involved. They can sign up to become census counters and earn extra money by calling 1-888-325-7733.
- Talk with your family, neighbors, fellow union members and congregation about the importance of being counted in the census.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper about the impact of the census on the community.

For more information, visit the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights website at [www.lccr.org](http://www.lccr.org) the AFL-CIO census website at [www.aflcio.org/census](http://www.aflcio.org/census) or call Susana Gomez at 202-637-5270. ☐

## A 'People's Stadium' Levels the Playing Field

ties and states are opening their checkbooks to sports team owners to build, or help finance, new play palaces with luxury sky boxes, private guarded entrances and ticket prices so steep that the cost of a game could go a long way toward meeting the basic needs of a low-income family.

Working Massachusetts, a coalition of unions, religious, welfare and community activists, drove that point home last fall when its members unveiled the "People's Stadium" during a statehouse rally, making the point that state lawmakers pay more attention to stadium dreams than working families' needs.

In 1999, the legislature approved plans to provide the

New England Patriots football team with \$70 million in state "welfare" aid for a new stadium and was studying a \$200 million deal for a new park for the Boston Red Sox. But by October, lawmakers were nearly four months late in delivering a state budget, delaying initiatives for poor and working families, including programs for child care and troubled teens, the mentally ill and homeless.

The People's Stadium plans call for no luxury boxes, but affordable housing; no obstructed view of economic security, but health care and child care; no multimillion-dollar play contracts, but a living wage for all; and no designer hot dogs, but a fully stocked food pantry so no one goes hungry. @

representative from software maker Novell Inc.

S. Jeff Cold, an assistant professor of computer sciences at UVSC and a former president of AFT Local 4877 in Orem, Utah, says he was inspired to teach the course after he visited the AFL-CIO website ([www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)) and read testimonials from workers whose

lives improved after joining a union. "It really helped me talk to these boys about union membership," he says.

Cold says many Scouts were unaware that unions predated the 20th century, or that salaried workers may be eligible for overtime. "I think the boys got a good exposure to labor issues," he says.

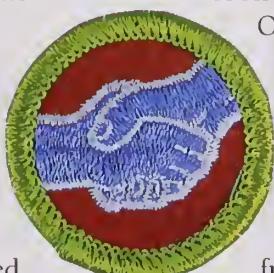
Scout's honor. @

## Scouting Out Union History

When it comes to union knowledge, Utah Boy Scouts will always be prepared.

Last year, Scout troops sponsored by Brigham Young University and Utah Valley State College added the American Labor merit badge, an option for all Boy Scout troops, to the traditional archery and first aid badges.

Nearly one dozen Scouts, often joined by their parents, attended sessions that examined U.S. labor history and discussed why workers choose a voice at work. Speakers included an Electrical Workers member and a management



Smells like a rat: Boston union members rally outside a union-busting conference.

## BUSTING THE Union-Busters

When registered nurse and AFSCME member Gemma Ziegler heard about a conference for union-busters, she decided to beat them—by joining them—and ended up busting the union-busters.

Ziegler, executive director of the Nurses Professional Organization in Louisville, Ky., an AFSCME affiliate, and two colleagues signed up for "Facing a Renewed Union Challenge," sponsored by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, after applying for a chamber membership using union letterhead that clearly identified their union affiliation.

As the November seminar opened, Ziegler was surprised when she saw her name in a training manual given out at the seminar in a section on "new union organizers." Moments later, a chamber official realized who they were. "He knelt next to our table and said, 'Ladies, you all are union,' and asked us to leave," Ziegler says. "We told him we had paid to attend and we wouldn't leave." But the official cleared the room.

"What I learned is that they are afraid of the power of the nurses," says Ziegler, who received a refund in the mail—the same day she got her membership welcome packet from the chamber.

In Boston a few weeks later, 40 union members and their supporters rallied outside a union-busting conference. Brian Brousseau, a member of the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers Local 33, dressed as a giant rat and tried to register for the conference using an oversized check. When conference organizers told him he was not dressed appropriately, he says he wondered aloud if it was because he wasn't wearing a tie. @

## BUST THE UNION-BUSTERS WEBSITE

The AFL-CIO launched a new tool for organizers up against big-bucks consultants hired to keep workers from gaining a voice on the job.

Launched on Jan. 1, Bust the Union-Busters website lets you get the facts you need and share the facts you have. Have you faced an anti-union consultant or lawyer in a recent campaign? Let us know at [infoctr@aflcio.org](mailto:infoctr@aflcio.org).

Need information on union-busters? The Union-Busters database is available on the AFL-CIO website at [www.aflcio.org/unionbuster](http://www.aflcio.org/unionbuster). To access it, you'll need a user ID and password. Talk with your national union's organizing department to find out how to access the database or visit the Bust the Union-Busters website and follow the simple instructions to send an e-mail to the right place automatically. @

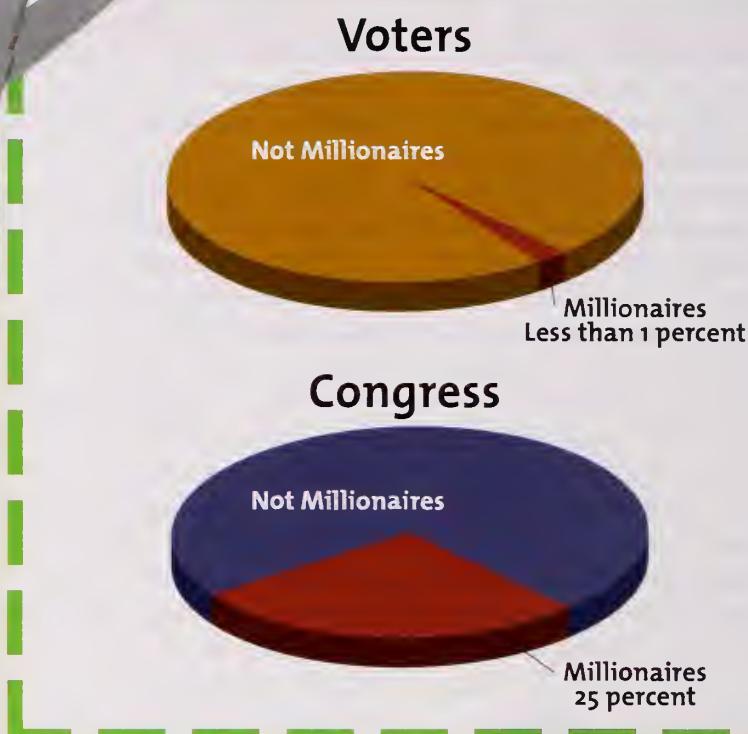
# An Exclusive Club Called Congress

With 182 bankers or business people, 172 lawyers and more than 125 millionaires, the U.S. Congress doesn't resemble working families—and it never has. Of the 1,851 senators who have served since the founding of Congress, only 27 have been women. In the House, 9,442 white men have held office, compared with only 98 African American men and women. State and local bodies reflect similar splits. As a way to ensure local, state and federal lawmakers best represent the interests of working families, the AFL-CIO launched the *2000 in 2000* initiative to identify and recruit 2,000 union members to run for public office in the 2000 cycle. After all, which elected official would you trust—a country club lawyer or a union brother or sister?



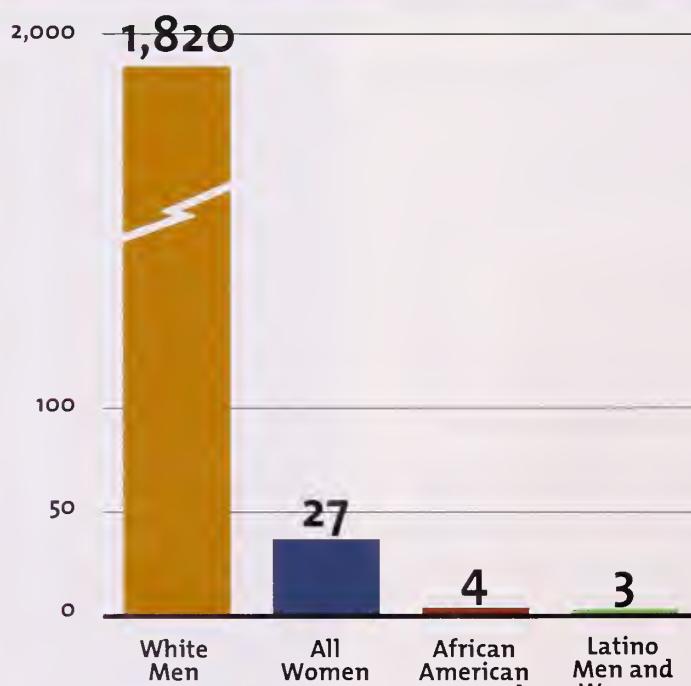
## The Millionaires' Club

One out of every four members of Congress is a millionaire



## A Senate Whitewash

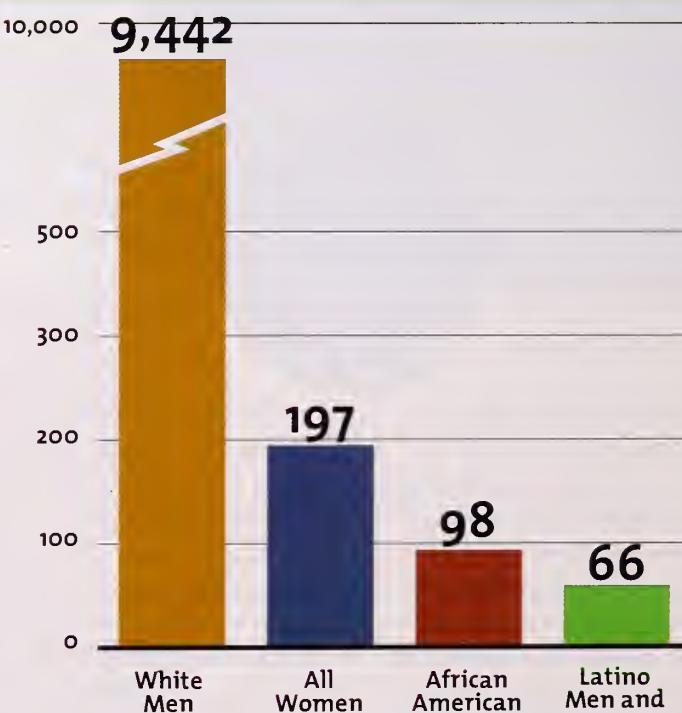
1,851 Americans have served in the U.S. Senate, including:



Women included in multiple categories.

## The Men of the House

9,736 Americans have served in the House of Representatives, including:



Women included in multiple categories.

## VIDEOS

**Lost Futures: The Problem of Child Labor** is a new 16-minute video produced by the AFT Child Labor Project for middle school students. The video covers child labor in the United States and around the world, and offers actions that students can take to fight child labor. Includes a teacher's guide with ideas for lesson plans and additional resources. \$10 for AFT members, \$15 for nonmembers. To get a video and lesson plan for your classroom, or to donate a set to your local middle school, mail a check to: AFT Child Labor Project, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

**Golden Lands, Working Hands**, a 10-part, three-hour video review of 150 years of California labor history, was produced by AFT after eight years of research and collaboration, underwritten in part by more than 400 contributions from local unions, central labor councils and international unions. Geared for high school audiences, the video offers students a deeper understanding of unions' contribution to the political, cultural and economic development of the state. \$99.95 for the video and \$129.95 for the video and classroom instruction materials. For more information, phone: 510-832-8812; e-mail: [aft oakland@igc.org](mailto:aft oakland@igc.org). @

## WEB CARTOONS

[www.cartoonwork.com](http://www.cartoonwork.com)—The website of the labor cartoon team Carol★Simpson enables union activists to download cartoons on unions and business issues for free to use on union websites. Camera-ready cartoons for printed leaflets and newsletters also are available for a negotiable fee. The cartoonists, Estelle Carol and Bob Simpson, belong to the Graphic Artists Guild and the National Writers Union/UAW.



## Find Out What's New from the AFL-CIO

Just published, the new 20-page, full-color catalog, *Publications*

& Other Resources from the AFL-CIO, highlights a variety of materials produced by the federation, including such "best-sellers" as The Union Difference booklet, "Today's Unions" hats, balloons and stickers, and such posters as one commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. Items are arranged by subject, such as "Organizing" and "Community Services." The catalog includes a convenient order

form and toll-free order number. For copies, call 1-800-442-5645 or 202-637-5042. @



[www.solidarity.com/hkcartoons/](http://www.solidarity.com/hkcartoons/)—The website of cartoonists Gary Huck and Mike Konopacki gives samples of their work and offers union publications and activists a monthly cartoon service based on publication circulation or use. @

## POLITICAL ACTION WEBSITES

[www.freedomchannel.com](http://www.freedomchannel.com)—This is a new, nonpartisan site that seeks to provide voters free access to issue videos from presidential, gubernatorial and congressional candidates, political par-

ties and America's leading issue groups. Visitors can see and hear candidates offer their positions on key issues in 90-second videos.

[www.voter.com](http://www.voter.com)—This nonpartisan website can be tailored to provide information on a visitor's congressional and local elected officials, along with news on issues selected by the visitor.

[www.aflcio.org/labor2000](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000)—The new AFL-CIO website shows where presidential candidates stand on working families' issues and enables you to talk back to politicians and get involved in Labor 2000. @

## NEWS SERVICE

Union publications can subscribe to the New York Labor History Association's News Service, which provides monthly articles on the struggles that helped build America's union movement. Launched in 1984, the service reaches more than 3 million union members, according to the association. Organization memberships include a subscription to the News Service from \$50 annually for local unions to \$250 for international unions for internal distribution. For more information, contact Jon Bloom at 212-627-1931. @

# Working Families Back Al Gore Because He Supports:



Al Gore meets with  
union members to  
hear their concerns.

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

## VOTE. You're more powerful than you think.

For more information about these issues, visit the AFL-CIO website at: [www.aflcio.org/labor2000](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000).



Clip here and use this camera-ready flier to spread the word that Al Gore is the best choice working families have for president.

### • A Voice at Work

Gore has been an outspoken champion of workers' freedom to choose a voice at work. He has opposed laws that would silence the voice of working families in politics. He led the fight to defeat the so-called Paycheck Protection Act in 1999 that would have silenced the voice of California's working families. Gore opposes so-called right-to-work laws. He also opposes allowing corporations to permanently replace striking workers.

(Associated Press, 9/13/99; *The Washington Post*, 9/7/99; *The Washington Post*, 2/22/95)

### • Secure Retirement

Gore supports protecting the Social Security surplus from raiding, and wants to set aside 60 percent of the non-Social Security federal budget surplus to ensure that Social Security and Medicare remain strong for future generations. He is in favor of adding prescription drug coverage under Medicare. (*Managing School Business*, 1/6/00; *Des Moines Register*, 5/10/98; *The Los Angeles Times*, 11/13/98; Gannett News Service, 6/3/96; *Omaha World Herald*, 4/9/99; *New York Newsday*, 1/21/99)

### • Good Jobs

Gore pledges to support prevailing-wage laws under Davis-Bacon. He has been a strong backer of equal pay and family and medical leave. He voted to raise the minimum wage in 1977, 1988 and 1989, and fought for an increase in 1996. He supports another increase to \$6.15 an hour.

(*The Columbus Dispatch*, 7/10/96; HR 2710, Congressional Vote #292, 11/8/89; HR 2, Congressional Vote #68, 5/17/89; HR 3744, Congressional Vote #622, 10/20/77)

### • Better Schools

Gore helped enact a law to hire 100,000 new teachers nationwide and lower class sizes in the early grades. He plans to invest the budget surplus in education to reduce class size, repair schools, train high-quality teachers and expand after-school programs. (1992 Congressional Record; *Des Moines Register*, 5/10/98; *The Los Angeles Times*, 11/13/98)

# America @ work

ALSO INSIDE:

Building a Network  
in the Fight for an  
Ergonomics Rule

New Alliance:  
Bringing It  
All Together



**GOVERNMENT:  
WHO NEEDS IT?  
All of Us**

### Say What?

How has your union gotten involved in the fight for an ergonomics rule?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

**America@work**  
815 16th St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
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e-mail: atwork@afcio.org

### Here's What You Say

#### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS WORKED TO MAKE THE WORKPLACE MORE WORKER-FRIENDLY:

"Our workers balance their multiple roles as workers, students, researchers, parents and family members....Our contract reflects these multiple roles in myriad ways. A Family Issues Committee, made up of representatives from management and from our unit, is specified in our contract, employing a [full-time] unit member....We are proud of the affordable, flexible child care center gained in our third contract....Our recently signed fourth contract includes language for a health and welfare trust fund.

"We are actively engaged in improving the lives of our members and of the community in which we live and work."—Mary Robison, financial secretary, Graduate Employee Organization/UAW Local 2322, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

### 100 YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND SUCCESS

"The special edition of *America@work* ["100 Years of Struggle and Success," January 2000] is outstanding and for me, timely. Our family put together a time capsule for the grandchildren and what a perfect depiction of what we are about! Educating our children and grandchildren about the labor movement is the key to their future—and ours. Thanks for a perfect addition to our capsule."—Ellen Arbogast, *Business Representative, IAM District 9, St. Louis*

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in *America@work*.

# America @ WORK

When you see  
**unions@work**  
and our  
**members@work**  
and collective power

in our

**communities@work**,  
that's when you see

# America @ WORK

March 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 3

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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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SHOULD TRADE  
BE FREE?  
? FROM  
ACCOUNTABILITY



## One Florida? One Message!

**M**ore than 30,000 union members, activists, religious and community leaders, women's groups and other allies formed a "coalition of conscience" and marched on Florida's capitol in Tallahassee March 7 to send "one message" to Gov. Jeb Bush (R): His One Florida initiative ending affirmative action in college admissions and state purchasing is wrong.

With little consultation, Bush inked the One Florida executive order last November. Efforts to get him to rescind it came to a head Jan. 18 when two Democratic state lawmakers—Rep. Tony Hill, secretary-treasurer of the Florida AFL-CIO, and Sen. Kendrick Meek—held a 25-hour sit-in at the lieutenant governor's office (see story, page 21). As a result, Bush agreed to hold three public hearings on the measure. More than 10,000 people turned out at the hearings—but on Feb. 18, the state Board of



AP PHOTO/TONY GUTIERREZ

**One voice: Dozens of unions took part in hearings to protest Gov. Bush's attacks on affirmative action.**

Lenard, president of the Florida AFL-CIO. Although the "March on Tallahassee: A Coalition of Conscience" took place on the opening day of the state legislature, Bush didn't mention the marchers in his state of the state address. ☐

negotiations collapsed, more than 10,000 workers represented by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace rallied at a stadium near Boeing's plant south of Seattle, backing up traffic for more than six miles.

Fed up with Boeing's demands for benefit concessions, including a health care co-payment, and wages 13 percent below market, SPEEA, which affiliated with Professional and Technical Engineers last fall, rejected two earlier offers.

"We're not being greedy," says 14-year Boeing veteran Laurie Ballard. "We're just

## Engineers, Technicians Wage Strike At Boeing

**W**earing red, white and blue and waving flags in honor of Presidents' Day, professional staff who make up the second-largest group of organized workers at Boeing Co. walked the picket line one more day with an all-American plea for workplace justice.

On Feb. 9, after mediated

Regents voted to drop affirmative action as an admissions criterion.

More than 4,000 union members took the lead in sending a message to Bush "who is deaf to the voices of working women and minorities on the affirmative action issue," says Marilyn

## A Super Tuesday for Working Families

**W**orking families helped propel Vice President Al Gore to a clean sweep of "Super Tuesday's" 15 primaries and caucuses March 7, enabling Gore to prevail over former Sen. Bill Bradley in every contest.

In February, the New York State AFL-CIO and the state's 31 central labor councils organized one of the biggest one-day political mobilizations ever when volunteers visited 10,000 worksites and distributed more than 1 million fliers. On Election Day, 40 percent of Democratic primary voters in the state were from union households.

"Union members stepped forward to support a pro-worker president who will fight for Social Security, education, health care and jobs," says Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Federation of Labor. "We beat Prop. 25, son of 226, and scored victories in the state legislature and Congress because union members mobilized. Our Labor-Neighbor programs delivered the message and the vote."

In Ohio, where union household voters made up 47 percent of the Democratic turnout, state AFL-CIO President Bill Burga said more than 400 local union volunteer coordinators helped distribute nearly 1 million workplace leaflets and made more than 100,000 phone calls to union families. Elsewhere, Machinists took part in worksite actions at Bath Iron Works Shipyard in Maine, Food and Commercial Workers distributed fliers at Kahn Meat Packing in Cincinnati, and hundreds of union members made tens of thousands of get-out-the-vote phone calls coordinated by central labor councils throughout California.

Gore's victories secured his Democratic nomination, as Bradley withdrew from the race and threw his support to Gore for the fall election. In Republican "Super Tuesday" elections, Texas Gov. George W. Bush took the lead over Sen. John McCain (Ariz), who suspended his campaign March 9.

(For the latest on the AFL-CIO's Labor 2000 mobilization, see [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm).) ☐

fighting to keep what we've already earned."

SPEEA says more than 80 percent of the 23,000 workers it represents—out of a bargaining unit in which 50 percent are dues-paying members—have walked out, causing Boeing to delay projects and plane deliveries.

The strike has galvanized community and union allies, with rallies throughout the Pacific Northwest, including a 2,500-strong demonstration with the Steelworkers Feb. 23. Restaurants are offering free food for striking workers and tens of thousands of dollars



AP PHOTO/ELAINE THOMPSON

**Striking in Seattle: In one of the largest working-class strikes in recent history, engineers and technical workers and their families join in outside Boeing headquarters.**

have poured into the union's strike relief fund. The AFL-CIO Executive Council last month pledged its strong support. ☐



**Strong as steel:** Nearly 800 Steelworkers took part in the first USWA International Women's Conference.

## Steelworkers Women Hold First Conference

Nearly 800 Steelworkers women gathered in Pittsburgh Feb. 6-9 in the first USWA International Women's Conference to discuss strategies for increasing their strength in the union movement through leadership skills development and by increasing activism within their union.

"It was like an electrical thing going on here," says Sharon Stiller, assistant to USWA President George Becker on women's issues. The meeting "started a fire for women throughout the United States and Canada. The environment was created, and they took hold of it."

Bettye Ridgely, a crane operator at Bethlehem Steel for 24 years, says greater union activism helps women empower themselves and push their priorities. "Right now, in the nongovernment sector, unions are the people who are focusing on some of the human and civil rights issues like affirmative action, violence against women and pay equity," she says.

USWA leaders say they are organizing shops in which a significant segment of the workforce is made up of women. By pursuing mentoring and networking strategies to help women become more

active, Stiller says, the union becomes more "user-friendly."

The conference laid the foundation for creating local union committees and regional councils to enhance the dialogue between the international and women activists. The councils will meet four times a year to share ideas on creating community-based networks.

Look for coverage in the April America@work of the March 9-12 Working Women 2000 Conference and the related national union meetings in Chicago. ☐

### SPOTLIGHT

## Wal-Mart Workers Stand Strong After Joining UFCW

The first U.S. workers at Wal-Mart to make their voices heard and join a union are standing strong against the giant retailer's attempts at union-busting.

Just days after employees at a Wal-Mart Supercenter meat department voted to join Food and Commercial Workers Local 540 in Jacksonville, Texas, the company announced plans that would potentially eliminate its meat departments nationwide and switch to meat that is cut, produced and wrapped off-site.

The success of the 12 Jacksonville workers in gaining union representation spurred workers in the meat department at the Palestine, Texas,

## UPS Must Create 2,000 Full-Time Jobs

Teamsters members and their families won a victory in late February when an arbitrator ruled that United Parcel Service must keep its pledge to create 2,000 new full-time jobs.

Three years ago, IBT members went on a 16-day strike to fight the company's attempt to erode full-time jobs. The workers ended the strike when UPS agreed to create 10,000 new full-time positions over five years—2,000 each year—but the company has not kept its word. The arbitrator's Feb. 16 order requires UPS to create the jobs within 90 days and pay back wages and benefits totaling \$80 million.

"We must remain diligent in ensuring that our UPS Teamsters have the dignity of full-time employment," says IBT President James P. Hoffa. "We look forward to the task of continuing to build a full-time America." ☐



**Special delivery:** A Teamsters member at UPS talks with IBT President James P. Hoffa.



MICHAEL O'Rourke

**Bad neighbor:** UFCW members rally against Wal-Mart policies that include low pay and few benefits for workers and products made overseas.

Wal-Mart to petition for a union, UFCW leaders say.

After Wal-Mart's plan became public, meat department employees across the country are contacting the UFCW to find out more about getting a union at their stores, the union says. Only with union representation can the workers fight the cutbacks, union leaders say, noting that Wal-Mart cannot make any changes in Jacksonville without first bargaining with the employees' legally elected union.

"Working people should

get credit for building a company like Wal-Mart," says Joe Hendricks, 61, a six-year veteran at the Jacksonville store. "Everything is out of proportion nowadays and it's very important for us to show the young people that they can have a decent, good-paying job."

One week before the Jacksonville vote, the company announced record profits—yet some 60 percent of its workers are not covered by the company's health plan because they either can't afford coverage or are not eligible. ☐

## Good Grief! He's a Union Man

Charles Schulz, who died in February, not only was the creator of Snoopy and the Peanuts gang—he was a friend of working families. In 1968, Schulz drew this cartoon for a flier used by the Unity Strike Information Committee during a Newspaper Guild strike in San Francisco. ☐

HERE'S THE WORLD WAR I  
FLYING ACE ZOOMING THROUGH  
THE AIR HIGH OVER THE LINES..  
"PICKET" LINES, THAT IS!



Tm. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.—All rights reserved  
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# Seminary Summer Launched

**B**uilding on the success of Union Summer, the AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ) will send 25 seminarians, novices, rabbinical students and other future religious leaders to join campaigns for workplace justice as part of Seminary Summer 2000. The seminarians will work with unions on organizing or first

contract campaigns, helping to build alliances with religious, community and union activists to support workers in their fight for a voice at work.

"More and more, labor and religion are teaming up to fight for workers' causes—together," says Kim Bobo, NICWJ executive director. "Seminary Summer provides an opportunity to further this mission."

Seminary Summer begins June 12 with a weeklong training and orientation class in Chicago, after which teams of two or three interns will spend the next nine weeks taking part in union campaigns. They will reconvene for the final weekend in Chicago. Interns will receive a weekly stipend of \$210, and housing will be provided. Application deadline is March 31.

For more information, contact the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice at 4th Floor, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, Chicago, Ill. 60660; phone: 773-728-8400; website: [www.nicwj.org](http://www.nicwj.org); call Union Summer/Seminary Summer at 800-952-2550; or visit the website: [www.aflcio.org/unionsummer](http://www.aflcio.org/unionsummer). ☐



## Executive Council Backs Global Fairness Campaign

**W**ith a message of "No Blank Check for China," the AFL-CIO Executive Council endorsed a campaign to fight an upcoming vote in Congress to grant permanent Normal Trade Relations status to China, forgoing the annual review process that shines a light on the country's disgraceful record of workers' and human rights violations. The campaign is the first step of a multiyear effort for a fair global economy that supports democratic economic development.

Meeting Feb. 15-17 in New Orleans, the Executive Council took a stand in solidarity with immigrant workers, unanimously passing a resolu-

tion urging reversal of current immigration laws that allow employers to manipulate the rules to squelch organizing. "Immigrants have played an important role in building democratic institutions," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. "If we are to have an immigration system that works, it must be orderly, responsible and fair."

Vice President Al Gore met with council members after serving coffee and doughnuts to workers at Avondale shipyard, where they recently won a six-year campaign to gain a voice at work with the Metal Trades Department Unions. He also met with New

Orleans hospitality employees, who still are seeking to form a union. "When people feel the only way they can get dignity and respect and fair wages is to join a union," Gore told council members, "then, by God, they ought to have the right under the laws of this country to do that." ☐



One on one: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joins workers in a light moment before the Executive Council meeting convened.



GE bargaining: CWA President Morton Bahr (left), IUE President Ed Fire and IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger (not pictured) discuss upcoming contract talks covering 40,000 workers at General Electric.

## Unions Back Student Protest Mexico

100,000 students, parents, members and communityists marched in Mexico City to protest the arrest of 745 members of a student strike at the University of Mexico. Students have been on a nine-month strike over government plans to begin charging tuition at the historically free public university in violation of the Mexican constitution. Union leaders, including STUNAM, which represents workers at the University of Mexico, and SITNAM, which represents workers at another public university in Mexico City, say this is the first step toward privatization of public education. @



DAVID BACON

## FAMILY FRIENDLY

### Negotiating Child Care Provisions, Expanded PARENTAL LEAVE

As more working parents try to balance their responsibilities at home and at work, their unions are negotiating new contracts that give them the tools they need to balance their jobs and families.

Such family-friendly provisions as child care, family leave and elder care are key issues in collective bargaining. Here are a few examples of recent family-friendly contracts:

- State Healthcare and Research Employees, an AFSCME affiliate, negotiated child care and adoption subsidies in its three-year contract with the University of Massachusetts Medical School last summer. Under the plan, the university contributes to subsidies for licensed child care providers, after-school programs, camps for snow days and legal adoptions.

- The California Faculty Association, an SEIU affiliate, recently bargained for several family-friendly provisions in its new agreement with California State University. Among the gains: an increase in paid parental leave days, expanded definition of bereavement leave and an end to limits on the amount of sick leave that can be used for family and medical leave. "Family issues are really important for workers, especially in a university setting," says CFA President Susan Meisenholder. "Employers who care about a happy, productive workforce have to start paying attention to things like child care and family leave."

- Canadian Auto Workers gained reductions in work time in contracts negotiated with the Big Three automakers in September. Along with regular vacation time, each worker will get an additional two weeks off with full pay each year. @

## OUT FRONT

As our movement confronts the global economy, we can look to our history for valuable lessons.

America's industrial workforce of the early 1920s was a workforce divided and conquered. We were separated by thick barriers of national origin and race. Irish, German, Polish, Italian—we spoke our own languages, shopped in stores run by "our own kind" and worked and socialized with those who spoke and looked as we did. African Americans and Mexican Americans were isolated even further, in the hardest, lowest-paying jobs and the least secure lives.

And because we were separate, we were weak, and easy prey for the corporate bosses who protected their fortunes by keeping us from joining together for our common good.

But the massive cultural transformation these workers wrought in the 1930s enabled us to discover that the bonds uniting working people were stronger than the barriers that kept us apart. We built an activist, pro-working family government that overcame the Depression, and we built our unions.

Today, our movement is working toward a similar transformation that will enable us to activate the common bonds that link workers in every part of the globe. Last month in New Orleans, the AFL-CIO Executive Council pledged to wage an all-out battle to make the global economy work for working families, beginning with a campaign to stop Congress from granting permanent Normal Trade Relations status to China until that notorious human rights abuser changes its ways (see page 6). We said we stand together with workers across the world for whom the price of dissent against oppression is brutality and re-education. Our parents and grandparents knew seven decades ago that their lot in life would not improve until America laid a basic floor of decency beneath every worker. Today, the global economy has made this true of workers everywhere.

In New Orleans, we also took a stand against an immigration system that enables bosses to exploit workers who come here from other countries. We said "No More!" to an immigration system that allows those same bosses to persecute immigrants when they attempt to win basic protections and that floor of decency by joining together in unions.

In previous gatherings, our movement's leaders also have agreed that until every vestige of discrimination against people of color, women and gays and lesbians has been obliterated from America, we will stand together to support affirmative action and abhor hate crimes.

Our parents and grandparents came to recognize that it matters far less what language we speak and where we live than that we all work for a living. If a boss can get by paying any of us \$2 for an hour or a day or a week of work, he has an advantage in lowering all of our standards to that level. If he can jail or torture or fire any of us for trying to gain a voice at work, we are all at risk.

We didn't allow that to happen in the 1930s. And we still won't. Our history reminds us that unity works. @

## Back to the Future—and Toward Unity



CHERYL GERBER  
BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# GOVERNMENT: WHO NEEDS IT? ALL OF US

BY DAVID KAMERAS  
ILLUSTRATION BY NIKOLAI PUNIN

Darlene Shelley understands how the federal government benefits American workers. Every day, Shelley, a service representative, sees an average of 150 people at the Social Security Administration's Akron (Ohio) District Office and receives satisfaction from assisting them. But to Shelley, it's more than her profession—it's personal.



A recent survey indicates the public is satisfied with the services from federal agencies, rating them on average nearly as high as those offered by the private sector. The American Customer Satisfaction index was developed by the University of Michigan Business School Society for Quality and the consulting firm Arthur Andersen. On a scale of 1 to 100, the average score for private-sector services was 72—and for public service, the average was 69. “It should be clear now that privatization is about moving money and playing a shell game with the numbers,” says AFGE President Bobby Harnage. “It’s not about saving money or customer satisfaction.”

“My husband was killed 14 years ago,” the AFGE member says. “I had two boys, 11 and 14, and there wasn’t enough income. Social Security made a big difference.”

Shelley’s experience isn’t unusual. Every day, Americans breathe cleaner air, drink cleaner water, drive on safer highways, work in safer jobs and retire in greater security because of the benefits government provides them, directly and indirectly.

Yet many of these same people view government with suspicion. Paradoxically, while they may profess cynicism about their government and subscribe to the myth that says government is too big, they value the services government programs deliver to them.

A 1998 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 64 percent of respondents think government is inefficient and wasteful, and an equal number think it controls too much of their daily lives. Some 57 percent surveyed say that government regulation of business does more harm than good. At the same time, 72 percent think it’s government’s role to ensure that no one goes without food, clothing and shelter.

### The great myth

This ambivalence exists because for more than two decades, Americans have heard a consistent message from political candidates and the media that cover them—a message summed up in Ronald Reagan’s first inaugural address: “Government is not the solution to our problems. Government is the problem.”

But it didn’t work out that way. In the early 1980s, a simultaneous runup in defense spending and massive tax cuts primarily targeted at the wealthy resulted in



PAUL HARBAUGH

**Government works: Through Social Security survivors' income, the federal government came through for AFGE member Darlene Shelley and her children after her husband died.**

skyrocketing national debt. Meanwhile, adult unemployment jumped from 4.8 percent in 1979 to 8.6 percent in 1982 and 1983, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics—and the workers who lost their jobs in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s risked falling through a fragile safety net shredded by huge cutbacks in social programs.

That message was reinforced last month in Oklahoma—already host to the tragic Oklahoma City federal building bombing perpetrated by anti-government extremists—when Gov. Frank Keating sarcastically suggested using “homicide” to handle unionized public school teachers. The mantra of “getting government off our backs” has offered the promise of unbounded prosperity, low taxes and great opportunity. An unfettered marketplace, we were told, would enable wealth to trickle down.

Despite the experiences of the 1980s, corporations continue to exploit the public’s anti-government sentiment to further their own greed. And why not? The private sector stands to reap huge profits by taking over such social programs as Social Security that traditionally are administered by government agencies. But unlike corporations, which exist to create more wealth for stockholders and CEOs, public agencies do not exist to make money—they exist to protect and serve citizens, and are

answerable to them. When corporations get into the business of providing services, ordinary citizens pay more for less.

Corporations promote lower business taxes, deregulation, free trade and an unregulated labor market, and fight mandated living wages and increases in the minimum wage to the detriment of working families. When public-service workers are portrayed as a hostile, alien force—and when large segments of the public buy into the myth—corporate allies in Congress have a green light to shift social responsibilities and costs to workers and communities.

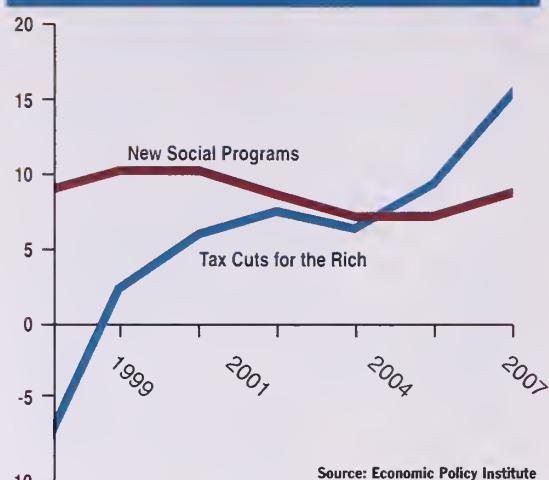
Shifting resources from Main Street to Wall Street already has resulted in a substantial drop in public investment. Despite the myth of big government, federal spending as a percentage of the gross domestic product essentially has been flat since 1952, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. Federal spending in such areas as education, transportation infrastructure and technology research and development has plummeted by one-third over the past 20 years, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Current trends suggest it may drop another 35 percent over the next decade.

Ironically, Wall Street’s obsession with short-term gain results in a long-term impact on the economy. In a recent brief paper, EPI economist Dean Baker noted that reduced federal spending on domestic programs is not being offset by increased spending in the private sector. “This shortfall raises serious questions about whether future workers will have the education and training they need to be productive, whether the nation will have the appropriate infrastructure to support the technologies of the next century and whether basic science is advancing at a pace needed to sustain innovations and technological advancements,” he warned.

For all the demonization of the federal government, civil servants still are regarded favorably. While 54 percent of



## Social Program Initiatives vs. Tax Cuts for the Rich, 1997–2007 (estimated)



those surveyed in a 1999 Peter Hart-Robert Teeter poll said that government is not “of, by and for the people,” only 6 percent of the 1,200 surveyed blamed government employees. Instead, 39 percent said government was being taken away from them by special interests, 29 percent fingered the media and 24 percent each blamed elected officials and political parties. The Pew study found especially high approval ratings for some federal agencies, such as the U.S. Postal Service (89 percent) and the National Park Service (85 percent). Respondents are far more likely to feel negatively about government as an abstraction than when asked to rate government employees or individual agencies.

### Government's role

A fundamental question facing working families is this: Should the social guarantees people need—a safe workplace, affordable health care, a secure retirement—be subject to the whims of corporate executives, who are answerable to shareholders and to themselves? Or should they be strengthened by public-service workers who are accountable to taxpayers?

*Should corporations dictate policy on*

*Social Security?* For more than 60 years, America's most successful family protection program has provided uninterrupted, guaranteed benefits to working families when a worker retires, becomes disabled or dies. Today, one in six Americans receives income from the program. But money managers and their congressional allies want to replace Social Security with risky private investment accounts that would require raising the retirement age, cutting benefits, slashing protections against inflation, raising taxes or running up huge new budget deficits. The mutual fund industry is poised to make billions of

dollars in administrative fees, far more than the 1 percent Social Security now spends on administrative fees, by handling trillions of taxpayer dollars—while workers risk losing their retirement security if their pensions are shifted to investment plans that expose them to market risk.

*Should corporations dictate policy on health care?* Good health insurance means workers can provide their families with quality care without having to choose between seeing a doctor and buying groceries. But for most workers, health insurance coverage has decreased and become more expensive or less flexible, while for-profit health maintenance organizations increasingly determine who gets care. According to data drawn from federal current population surveys, 44.3 million Americans—11.1 million of them children—had no health insurance in 1998. Unions and other working family organizations are pressing for adoption of a Patients' Bill of Rights to establish standards for health care quality and access—while insurance interests lobby to keep Congress from passing meaningful health care reform legislation.

*Should corporations dictate tax policy?* The current congressional leadership says tax cuts help the middle class. But the wealthiest 1 percent of families, who can defer taxes on their unrealized capital gains, are on average paying \$36,710 less than in 1977, according to EPI. Meanwhile, major corporations get tax breaks and other forms of corporate welfare, such as for marketing their products overseas, while ordinary taxpayers pick up the slack. In 1977, individual income taxes made up 44.3 percent of total federal receipts; in 1999, that figure was estimated to be 48.1 percent, according to federal budget data. Corporate income taxes in 1977 accounted for 15.4 percent of total federal tax receipts; the 1999 estimate was 10.1 percent.

*Should corporations dictate foreign policy?* In principle, the United States supports workers' and human rights around the globe. In reality, rogue nations enjoy favorable trade status at the behest of multinational corporations that seek to race to the bottom of the global wage scale and to keep markets open at any cost. China, for example, continues to repress its independent union, religious and democracy movements while enjoying access to U.S.

## Reading Between the Lines

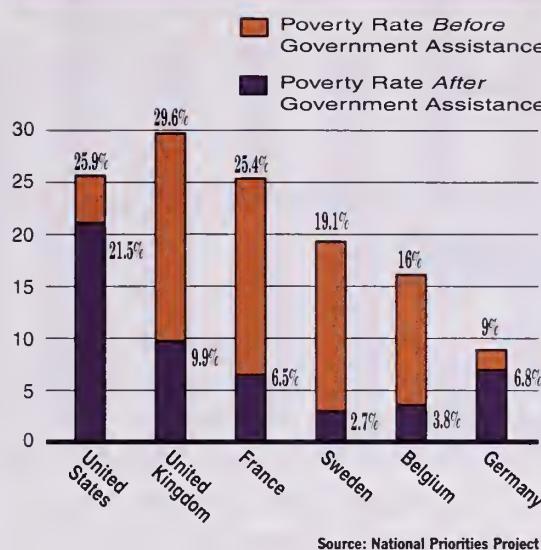
Many people form their impressions of public services and the economy from television and newspapers. Yet reporters and announcers—many of whom boast six-figure household incomes—hold markedly different perspectives than the majority of the public. A 1998 survey for Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting reveals that on a broad range of economic issues, reporters who cover Washington, D.C., often are more conservative than the public.

Of the 141 respondents, only 5 percent said U.S. conditions are fair or poor, compared with 34 percent of the general public questioned in nationwide polls. Issues such as Fast Track authority to negotiate new trade agreements starkly illustrate the divergence: While the public opposed Fast Track by 67 percent, journalists supported it by 71 percent.

These are the people from whom most American workers get their views on the economy. Stagnating real wages, increased work hours, decreased family and leisure time and the widening wealth gap between workers and the well-off often get overlooked. Much of the news also reflects the perspective of major media outlets beholden to their advertisers and corporate overlords, such as the Detroit newspapers—which locked out striking workers in 1997—and the ABC-Capital Cities-Disney conglomerate, whose biases often reflect unenlightened workplace policies.

When the mainstream media fails to address pocketbook issues, it makes it especially important for unions to inform their members and all working families. ☐

## Child Poverty Rate Before and After Government Assistance



markets for its goods, some manufactured in forced labor camps. Meanwhile, American workers lose their jobs because of products illegally dumped on our shores, and the economy is weakened by a trade deficit.

In a democracy, public agencies are obliged to answer to the common good, not to moneyed interests. In 1998, Big Business spent \$666.6 million on candidates and parties, outspending working families 11-to-1, according to a survey from the Center for Responsive Politics. When Big Business controls social policy and programs, it is answerable to its shareholders. We need to counterbalance the enormous power that corporations wield to further their agenda. We need to take our government back.

### Taking our government back

When we take a greater role in choosing whom we elect to public office, we can ensure government is responsive to the needs of working families. In the past, union members' political activism helped push through an array of progressive legislation, addressing such issues as child labor, universal and free public education, Social Security, Medicare and occupational safety and dramatically improving the lives of American families.

Associates illustrates the success of these efforts: 70 percent of union members said they received information about the election from their unions—and 64 percent said the information was important or very important to them.

Working with its affiliates, the AFL-CIO is involved in Labor 2000—a grassroots effort to educate and motivate union members and get them voting. Drawing on coalitions of diverse community, religious and union groups, Labor 2000 is helping determine the kind of government we will have in the new millennium. ☐

## U.S. Children: Among the Poorest in Industrialized Nations

When public investment declines, children are hurt the worst. Shifting more of the financial burden of health care and child care to working families means struggling families must work even longer at the expense of family time while stretching their budgets ever thinner. For some, it means poverty. While 13.7 percent of Americans lived below the poverty line in 1996, up from 12.8 percent in 1989, one-fifth (21.5 percent) of the nation's children were poor—a significant increase from 16.4 percent two years before Ronald Reagan took office. Poor children attend school on empty stomachs, and are more likely to be sick, drop out of school and earn less, according to government data and studies by economists at the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin.

Public assistance can reduce child poverty dramatically. For example, Sweden's 2.7 percent child poverty rate would catapult to 19.1 percent in the absence of government help; Belgium's 3.8 percent rate would go to 16 percent. According to the National Priorities Project, the United States is alone among the top 17 industrialized countries in rejecting tax adjustments and revenue transfers and programs to pull most of its poor kids above the poverty line. ☐



*"And, in a move sure to attract the attention of regulators, the private sector made a bid to acquire the public sector."*

A post-election survey  
by Peter D. Hart Research

# Building a

BY MIKE HALL

In November 1999, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued its proposed standard on workplace ergonomics after union members successfully fought back years of ferocious opposition by Big Business and its congressional allies.

"When I heard they were going to put out the ergonomic rules, I thought, 'It's about time,' because we've got to have something that jump-starts these companies so workers don't get hurt," recalls Madeleine Sherod, president of Steelworkers Local 960 in Illinois, a veteran of three job-related carpal tunnel syndrome operations who long has been active in building support locally and in Washington, D.C., for an ergonomics standard.

While Big Business has spent big dollars to derail passage of an ergonomics regulation and hamstring OSHA, workers have built a strong grassroots base during the past decade to put workplace safety before the public eye and keep the heat on lawmakers. That nationwide network will mobilize again this month when workers and their unions take part in a series of public hearings on the proposed workplace ergonomic standards (see story, page 14).

"This hasn't been just a legal or legislative battle. It's been about building an army of workers, occupational safety advocates, community groups—and winning the hearts and minds of the public," says Nancy Lessin, who helped build an ergonomics coalition made up of hundreds of local unions, academics, medical and science experts and community groups for the Massachusetts Coalition on Safety and Health (MassCOSH). In June 1999, she joined the Massachusetts AFL-CIO as health and safety coordinator.

In a multiyear fight for an ergonomics rule, safety and health activists created lasting structures for fast action

More than a decade's worth of scientific research and government surveys—some 2,000 studies and articles, according to OSHA—show that poorly designed workplaces, and jobs that require constant repetitive motion, awkward posture and forceful movements, are significant safety and health hazards. Each year, more than 1.8 million workers suffer from painful carpal tunnel syndrome, injured backs and other musculoskeletal injuries, and more than 600,000 workers are forced to take time off from work so their injuries can heal, according to OSHA.

Eliminating those hazards and redesigning jobs and workplaces can spare an

average of 300,000 workers from painful, potentially disabling injuries each year, and \$9 billion can be saved annually under the proposed ergonomics program standard, says Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman. Herman said that many employers have told OSHA that ergonomics programs produce a net economic gain because they reduce injuries and improve performance.

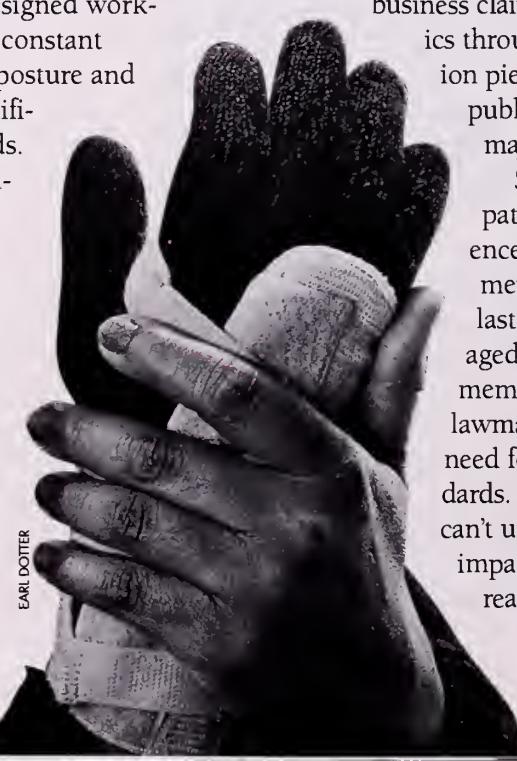
But Big Business and its allies in Congress have fought these common sense workplace rules with big bucks and an almost religious zeal. And union members have fought back with a grassroots campaign that brought to light the crippling pain of on-the-job repetitive motion injuries.

"We've been able to counter employer rhetoric by being out in the community and putting a human face on what ergonomics is really about," says Lessin. "At this point, few people don't have a friend or relative, or even themselves, who has suffered a back or repetitive strain injury."

In Massachusetts, as elsewhere, Lessin says, union members, injured workers and health and safety professionals have refuted business claims about ergonomics through letters and opinion pieces to community publications as well as major newspapers.

Sherod, who participated in a press conference organized by members of Congress last year, has encouraged her local union members to write their lawmakers about the need for OSHA's new standards. She stresses, "You can't underestimate the impact of a letter from a real person."

EARL DOTTER





### Crafting coalitions

Throughout the long Stop the Pain! fight, injured workers, union leaders and health and safety experts waged a strategic, grassroots campaign to keep the spotlight on

safety. In 1995, far-right lawmakers led by Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) took control of Congress. Aiming to dismantle worker protection agencies and laws, they focused on gutting OSHA and working against an ergonomics regulation.

To counter the attacks, union members around the country planned actions during congressional recesses to confront such anti-worker lawmakers as Rep. Cass Ballenger (R-N.C.), chairman of the House committee charged with considering OSHA legislation. In city after city, local unions rallied—hundreds of members from several local unions marched in front of the OSHA regional office in Boston—and met with lawmakers or local OSHA staff. In New York City, for instance, more than 100 UNITE members arranged a special meeting with OSHA's New York regional director.

The workers' counterattack was successful: In July 1996, Congress lifted a ban—orchestrated by the new, far-right majority—that prohibited OSHA from spending any funds on developing an ergonomics standard.



On the front lines: Ergonomics activist and Steelworkers Local 960 President Madeleine Sherod says you can't underestimate one-on-one contact with lawmakers.

### Building on an activist base

While Big Business and its friends continued to fight against an ergonomics standard, the battle came to a head last year when OSHA announced that it intended to issue proposed rules. Two bills, one in the House and one in the Senate, were introduced to stop OSHA from issuing any new rules covering ergonomics.

Mobilizing an activist base built up during the ergonomics battle, union members



Stop the Pain! Rallies such as this 1995 demonstration organized by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO have been a part of building a lasting network of safety and health activists.

responded. In upstate New York, local unions, working with Western New York COSH, called on a special ergonomics committee they had formed.

Warehouse worker Ken Bojanek, a member of Teamsters Local 264 and a local union ergonomics instructor, says one of the more successful mobilization tactics was a postcard campaign to area congressional representatives urging defeat of the bills. The local fashioned the campaign on the concept of a telephone tree. One worker delivers the cards to several others who, in turn, make deliveries to others, until every worker in every department on every shift has been contacted. Bojanek says that campaign racked up 100 percent participation from the 400 union workers at his grocery warehouse.

The House bill (H.R. 987) passed by a scant six votes. (To see whether your House member stood up for workers, click on [www.aflcio.org/vrecord/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/vrecord/index.htm).)

Meanwhile, in the Senate, pro-worker

lawmakers began efforts last September to thwart a bill (S. 1070) that would have blocked OSHA from issuing ergonomics standards or even voluntary guidelines until another National Academy of Sciences study is completed. UNITE members in Columbus, Ga., and Phenix City, Ala., took action to ensure the Senate would not vote on the bill. After Angie Rogers, president of Local 1855C, and other activists and union leaders heard reports that Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.) may have been leaning to support a business-backed move to force a vote, they organized an education effort to mobilize the three Pillowtex locals' 1,200 members in a phone call and letter-writing campaign urging Cleland's support.

"We got the workers involved and passed out leaflets at the plant gates and talked to them and they made the phone calls and wrote the letters," says Rogers, a folding machine operator and 31-year employee at Pillowtex. It worked. In a letter to the workers, Cleland reaffirmed his support of OSHA's efforts and for the fight to keep the bill from a vote. The bill was pulled from the floor.

## Mark Your Calendar

Starting March 13 in Washington, D.C., the Occupational Safety and Health Administration launched a series of hearings around the country on OSHA's proposed ergonomic standards.

The deadline has passed for submitting requests to testify, but union members still can attend upcoming hearings:

March 13–April 7: Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave., N.W.

April 11–April 21: Chicago, the James R. Thompson Center, State of Illinois Building, 100 W. Randolph St.

April 24–May 3: Portland, Ore., Courtroom No. 16, Mark Hatfield Federal Courtroom, 1000 S.W. Third Ave.

For more information, call OSHA at 202-693-2350 or check the OSHA website at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

**MOURN  
for the dead  
FIGHT  
for the living**

ORGANIZE  
AND  
MOBILIZE  
FOR  
SAFE JOBS

## What You Can Do

Make sure your state and federal lawmakers know that on Election Day you will hold them accountable for their votes on ergonomic issues.

- Send a letter to members of Congress supporting passage of an ergonomics regulation. Click on the AFL-CIO website: [www.capweb.net/aflcio/Contact.morph](http://www.capweb.net/aflcio/Contact.morph) to e-mail your member of Congress.
- Attend the ergonomic hearings this spring in support of the OSHA proposal (see below).
- Contact your national or international union, state federation, central labor council or the AFL-CIO Safety and Health Department to organize Workers Memorial Day actions around ergonomics. For more information on the Stop the Pain! campaign and Workers Memorial Day, visit the AFL-CIO website at [www.aflcio.org/safety](http://www.aflcio.org/safety).

## A solid base for future actions

This January, Bojanek says, the New York coalition organized a hearing for workers and their advocates to comment on OSHA's proposed standards. More than two dozen workers testified. Bojanek described a successful ergonomics training program the local launched to demonstrate that ergonomics training and standards reduce injuries and are cost effective.

Bojanek described how, after overcoming initial management reluctance, the local worked with WNYCOSH and an OSHA grant to establish an ergonomics program in the fall of 1998 at the Tops grocery warehouse in Lancaster, N.Y. More than 600 union and management employees received training in preventing injuries, and the company modified equipment and jobs. Within a year, injuries fell by 50 percent. While a warehouse trade group, Food Distributors International, estimated it would cost \$500,000 to implement an ergonomics program at a food warehouse, Bojanek reports the cost to Tops was \$20,000.

"But without an ergonomics standard on the books, management could throw this out with the bath water tomorrow," Bojanek says. "And for every responsible employer, there are many more who choose not to support a 'worker-friendly' worksite. All workers deserve the same protection."

"If we hadn't built our coalition over the years, we wouldn't have been able to so rapidly come together and testify at the critical time when the ergonomics rule was proposed," says Bojanek.

This congressional session, anti-worker lawmakers and their corporate allies vow to continue their decadelong battle against workplace safety measures and their attempt to prevent passage of the ergonomics rule.

And after a decade of work toward an ergonomics rule, union activists have built the network of committed activists who can successfully take the fight to the next step. "If we have to go back to Washington and do this all over again, I'd do it in a heartbeat," Sherod says.

## Workers Memorial Day: April 28

April 28 marks Workers Memorial Day, when union members will honor workers who have been killed and injured on the job and strategize to organize and mobilize for safe jobs.

At hundreds of memorial services, rallies and demonstrations across the country, workers will call for:

- Passage of a federal ergonomics standard.
- An end to congressional and employer attacks on workers' safety and health and workers' rights.
- The right of workers to organize and join unions without employer interference or intimidation.
- Stronger safety and health protections and enforcement.
- Stronger whistler-blower protections for workers who report job hazards and injuries.
- Coverage for all workers under the job safety law.

For more information, materials and mobilization suggestions, contact the AFL-CIO Safety and Health Department at 202-637-5366; fax: 202-508-6978; website: [www.aflcio.org/safety/legi.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/safety/legi.htm).

# The New Alliance:

## Bringing It All Together



CHERYL GERBER

*The American union movement is restructuring to build strength and unity at the local, state and national levels. Several union leaders recently discussed the New Alliance with America@work writer Laureen Lazarovici. Participating in the roundtable were Sarah Palmer Amos, executive vice president of Food and Commercial Workers; James Andrews, president of the North Carolina State AFL-CIO; Miguel Contreras, L.A. County Federation of Labor executive secretary-treasurer; Mark Gaffney, president of the Michigan State AFL-CIO; Ed McElroy, secretary-treasurer of AFT; and Leslie Moody, Denver Area Labor Federation president.*

**Q:** What experiences and observations have you had as a union leader that point to a need for a New Alliance?

**Moody:** During the 1998 elections, some strategic planning where local unions, labor councils and state federations played a role would have made us able to hit the ground running instead of starting from scratch. The flip side is, we're doing that for 2000. We have been working for six months with our locals, the central labor councils around the state and the state federation to develop a unified plan and program to move all of our members to the polls. I've seen both why we need a New Alliance and how it could work.

**Andrews:** You're right. It's about planning—but it's also about change. I've been frustrated because we had rules that were outdated. I would hear people say, "You can't do this because it's not in the rules."

I'd say, "Why can't we figure out something different?" I'm excited about moving the New Alliance forward because there are clear examples of a need to rethink our

structure and make it work for every element of our movement. If it means throwing out all the old rules, let's throw them out. If it means keeping some and revamping them, let's do that.

**Palmer Amos:** We found out that 30 percent of charges on Union Privilege charge cards were at Wal-Mart. These are union members who are shopping at the most anti-union employer we deal with. We need to make sure we have a way to get that message out. When we're having a site fight to prevent Wal-Mart from coming in, folks at that central body need to know about that, need to be talking to politicians about that, need to be involved in the community. That's what New Alliance is about: reactivating that bottom-up empowerment that built the union movement and having it there to build the movement again.

### Step by Step to a New Alliance

BEGINNING IN 1998, the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee 2000 visited and surveyed state federations and central labor councils around the country and met with union leaders at conference forums in an effort to learn firsthand successful strategies to build a union movement and determine tactics that need to be changed for the future. After the nearly yearlong process, the committee proposed a New Alliance aimed at building local and state union movements that can address working family issues and create an environment that supports workers' freedom to choose a voice at work.

The Executive Council approved the New Alliance proposal at the 1999 AFL-CIO convention in October. Since then, union leaders from affiliated unions, state federations and central labor councils have met in a series of New Alliance work group meetings to develop guidelines on implementing the program. Meeting in February, Executive Council members discussed plans for the first wave of states to take part in the New Alliance: Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon. @



**The New Alliance is about reactivating that bottom-up empowerment that built the union movement and having it there to build the movement again.**

—SARAH PALMER AMOS, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, UFCW

Contreras: In L.A. County, we know affiliates have a great task in front of them to organize all the workers who need unions, and they know we can't do it alone. We're going to need the synergy of national unions, local leadership, state and national AFL-CIO leadership. We have to be able to work together and we know we can't do that without the New Alliance. We've got to put everyone on the same page, working on the same program.

Gaffney: In Michigan, we have 26 central labor councils. They want to participate in the programs—Union Cities, Voice@Work—but aren't always able to do it. They are staffed by officers who have other jobs with their respective unions. We asked ourselves, "Can we change the structure to better create that synergy to better meet our goals?"

McElroy: Changing structure is critical because the union movement can be a very vertical organization: I'm with AFT, Sarah's with UFCW, someone else is with the Steelworkers. We can make decisions that are good for us but don't take into consideration everybody who's part of the union movement. The greatest strength that the AFL-CIO has is that it forces everyone to think horizontally, to ask the questions: "How does this affect everybody who works, everybody who should be organized, everybody who has a legislative interest? How does this election affect everyone who is in a political jurisdiction?" That's why the New Alliance is important.

Q: Many decisions and policies that used to be made at the national level, such as on training, workforce policies and economic development, have now shifted to the state and local level. How does the

New Alliance help us adapt to that new environment?

Moody: The folks who are coordinating attacks on working families are moving from state to state and taking what worked in one state to others. For instance, we are dealing with a woman in Colorado now who goes from state to state telling state governments how to demolish and privatize state mental health programs. Our AFT affiliate knew what happened in other states. That sharing of information [meant] the state federation was working with the local affiliate on lobbying the legislature, and we were doing press releases and [pushing for a big] turnout for a big hearing.

McElroy: That shows how we have to be aware that these things can't be handled by one little unit someplace taking on companies that have huge resources.

Andrews: There also is a recognition that a lot of local elected officials soon become federal officials. We've got to equip state and local federations to deal with that on the political level. You would have thought that paycheck deception would have been a federal issue, but it wasn't.

Gaffney: In Michigan, we're working on addressing managed care in the mental health delivery system. The decision to go to managed care was made on the federal level, but the implementation is through the state and county level. We either could leave each labor council to deal with it in their respective county, or we could pull

**When we have the same vision, we can move mountains.**

—MIGUEL CONTRERAS,  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER,  
L.A. COUNTY FEDERATION OF LABOR



**We're strongest when we ask: "How does this affect everybody who works, everybody who should be organized, everybody who has a legislative interest?"**

—ED McELROY, SECRETARY-TREASURER, AFT



them all together—including all the international unions, especially the ones with members employed in that industry—and have a statewide response. That's exactly what we're doing. We are holding a seminar with a university to bring in people outside the union movement where we may find allies, including a mental health association and health providers.

**Q:** How would a New Alliance affect the average union member, and how would it affect the average potential new union member?

**Palmer Amos:** Members all want a union that can give them effective representation. And potential new members want to know, "Are there laws that allow me to organize and not lose my job?" Only with a New Alliance do we have a chance of having those kinds of laws. For our current members, the percentage of people we represent in a market translates into what they get at the bargaining table. So, having the ability to deliver laws that allow workers to organize and allow them to bargain effectively is important to them.

**Moody:** If we are really about building power for working people—for all working families, not just our members—we have to be strategic and smart with the limited resources we have. The New Alliance forces us to sit down and makes us focus our energy on building power for working people. It gets us focused on giving them a voice, whether at the ballot box, in the legislature or in the workplace. People want to be on a winning team.

**For current members, at contract or budget time, the New Alliance means they will see more solidarity, more concern for their individual fight from other workers in the community.**

—MARK GAFFNEY, PRESIDENT, MICHIGAN STATE AFL-CIO



CHERYL GERBER

When we start to win, it's going to just move forward exponentially.

**Andrews:** The New Alliance also will help us move forward and energize our membership. It will say to rank-and-file members, "There's more you can do. If you are going to protect your wages and standard of living, we need your help, not just with the work but with determining what that work looks like." And the nonunion member will see that it's not OK to stand by and see companies rip off workers.

**The New Alliance forces us to sit down and makes us focus our energy on building power for working people.**

—LESLIE MOODY, PRESIDENT, DENVER AREA LABOR FEDERATION

A circular portrait of Leslie Moody, a woman with glasses and a dark suit, framed in a circular border.

CHERYL GERBER

If it means throwing out all the old rules, let's throw them out. If it means keeping some and revamping them, let's do that.

—JAMES ANDREWS, PRESIDENT, NORTH CAROLINA STATE AFL-CIO

**Gaffney:** And for current members, at contract time or budget time, they will see more solidarity, more concern for their individual fight from other workers in their community. Workers involved in organizing campaigns would immediately know that much of the community, all of the other unions and unionized workers were cheering for them. To the degree that the New Alliance brings in people from the community and other unions, it accomplishes that.

**Contreras:** In Los Angeles, in the next six months, 260,000 workers will be in bargaining in 11 different unions. We're bringing them all in to communicate the same economic message about the widening wage gap in Los Angeles. We've been able to coordinate with local and international unions. So if you are a bus driver, you are represented not only by your union but also by the entire union movement. For unorganized workers, they will see that there's a united labor movement, from Washington to Sacramento to Los Angeles, that has their interests in mind, whether in legislation or organizing. That's a strong message to send. When we have the same vision, we can move mountains. ☐

# High Stakes

BY MIKE HALL



DAVID C. BOWMAN



**Rebuild our schools:** Union members turned out to support passage of school construction bills last year, such as at this Norfolk, Va., event, attended by President Clinton, and will continue to fight for the bill's passage this congressional season.

**T**he U.S. Senate wasted little time in setting the tone on working family issues for this election-year session of Congress. On Feb. 2, the Senate passed a bankruptcy bill (S. 625) that includes \$75 billion in tax breaks for businesses over a 10-year period and a \$1-per-hour increase in the minimum wage over three years—33 cents a year.

Working families and their unions back a wage hike over two years, instead of the “watered-down version...that would cost a full-time, minimum-wage worker \$1,200 over three years,” Democratic senators wrote in a “Dear Colleague” letter.

This kind of division between Congress’ pro-working family lawmakers and its Big Business-backed majority is likely to continue in what AFL-CIO President John Sweeney notes is “a high-stakes, consequential legislative year before the 2000 elections on November 7.”

High-stakes issues this year for working families include a House minimum-wage

bill; a final version of the Patients’ Bill of Rights; legislation to rebuild America’s crumbling schools; China’s trade status with the United States; strengthening Social Security and adding prescription drug coverage to Medicare; and the battle over new ergonomic standards (see story, page 12).

Here’s a look at the issues.

## PATIENTS’ BILL OF RIGHTS

The House and Senate are meeting to iron out the differences between House and Senate bills on the Patients’ Bill of Rights measures. The House version (H.R. 2723)—backed by working families, their unions and a handful of GOP physician members who bucked their leadership—extends patient protections to the 161 million Americans in private health plans. The House bill also provides for a timely, independent, external review and allows patients to hold

health plans accountable when HMO decisions injure or even kill patients. It protects health care workers from retaliation by their employers when they act as advocates on behalf of patients, and ensures that individuals have access to emergency room care and prescription drugs and can participate in clinical trials.

In contrast, the Senate bill (S. 1344) excludes more than 100 million people who are in “self-funded” health care plans. The Senate version gives health plans the final say on medical treatment decisions and lacks such important comprehensive patient protections as patient advocacy language; access to specialists and clinical trials; an ade-

quate provider network; and continuity of care, allowing patients to continue to see their health care provider when the provider has left the managed care network.

## PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE STATUS FOR CHINA

Congress may soon vote on granting China permanent Normal Trade Relations status (formerly called Most Favored Nation status). Currently, China’s trade status is decided annually after Congress assesses China’s record on human and workers’ rights, use of prison labor and compliance with other trade agreements.

“China is one of the worst offenders of human rights in the world,” says Sweeney. “China uses executions and torture to maintain order, persecutes religious minorities and violates workers’ rights.”

# for Working Families

## SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Despite bipartisan support for three school construction bills (H.R. 1660, H.R. 1760 and S. 1454), Congress failed to act last year. Those bills authorize federal tax subsidies for school modernization so school districts can build, modernize and repair public schools to reduce class size, enhance learning and wire classrooms for new technology. One or more of the bills are expected to be considered this session. In addition, two other bills (H.R. 3705 and S. 2124) have been introduced in Congress that would provide \$1.3 billion in loans and grants to help repair our nation's most dilapidated schools.

## MINIMUM WAGE

On March 9, the House passed a Republican tax-cut and minimum-wage bill that gives upper income taxpayers \$11 in tax breaks for every \$1 that goes to minimum-wage workers over the next decade, according to the Economic Policy Institute and Citizens for Tax Justice. It also removes important overtime provisions in the Fair Labor Standards Act. The original GOP package called for the raise over three years, but a Democratic amendment to provide the raise over two years was approved.

President Clinton urged Congress to pass a "clean, straightforward" \$1-an-hour-over-two-years wage bill—such as Rep. David Bonior's H.R. 325—and threatened to veto both House and Senate versions because of the tax cuts for the rich provisions.

## MEDICARE

President Clinton's budget proposal sets aside almost \$300 billion of the projected 10-year federal budget surplus to extend Medicare's solvency from 2015 under current projections to 2027. It also includes a provision to provide prescription drug coverage for Medicare beneficiaries. Clinton notes that some three out of five seniors lack dependable drug coverage. Several bills addressing the issue of providing universal prescription coverage also are pending, including S. 841, H.R. 1495 and H.R. 664. Clinton also has proposed tax credits to allow people between ages 55 and 65 to buy in to Medicare and to help offset the cost of caring for elderly relatives.

However, Sens. John Breaux (D-La.) and Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Rep. Bill Thomas (R-Calif.) have introduced legislation opposed by unions that would privatize part of Medicare through a voucher program.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

Last year, risky Wall Street-backed Social Security privatization schemes, such as those in several Republican legislative proposals, were stopped in Congress—but they may be revived this election year.

AFL-CIO unions have not endorsed a specific Social Security legislative proposal. Any Social Security reform must be centered on using the projected federal budget surplus to strengthen the system, must maintain the rock-solid guaranteed benefits Social Security

now provides, should not raise the retirement age and should raise the earning caps subject to the Social Security payroll tax to ensure wealthier wage earners pay a fair share.

## TAXES

Last year, the GOP's \$792 billion proposed tax-cut package suffered an embarrassing defeat. Most of its benefits—such as a capital gains tax cut and repeal of the estate tax—would have benefited the wealthy instead of providing funds to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. This year, Republican leaders changed tactics. They have proposed several smaller tax bills, such as the \$182 billion H.R. 6, which eats up some 20 percent of projected budget surpluses, and a bill that would give tax relief for private school costs as part of a voucher-like program (S. 1134).

In a rare unanimous vote, the House approved legislation (H.R. 5) March 1 to repeal the Social Security earnings limit that penalizes working seniors, ages 65–69 years, \$1 for every \$3 they earn above \$17,000. The Senate is expected to approve the bill, and President Clinton has said he would sign it.

In a letter to House members before they narrowly approved H.R. 6, which reduces the income taxes paid by married couples, including high-income couples, the AFL-CIO urged that Congress "establish a comprehensive budget framework to strengthen Social Security and Medicare" before using projected budget surpluses to pay for tax cuts.

Texas governor and Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush has proposed a \$1.3 trillion tax scheme that the watchdog group Citizens for Tax Justice says would eat up between 41 percent and 78 percent of the projected budget surplus, leaving little for Social Security or Medicare. Some Bush backers in Congress may offer the plan. @

## Building Trades Score Early Victory

Building and Construction Trades Department unions' grassroots lobbying campaign to persuade Congress to defeat the Fair Access to Indemnity and Reimbursement Act paid off in February, when the House postponed its vote.

H.R. 1987 would require the National Labor Relations Board and Department of Labor to pay the fees and expenses of "small businesses" that win any administrative or judicial proceedings before the agencies, regardless of whether the enforcement action was substantially justified. By expanding the definition of "small employer" to those with 100 or fewer workers—instead of the 20 or fewer defined by most federal acts, such as the Civil Rights and Americans with Disabilities acts—the bill would cover nearly 90 percent of all employers.

Building trades unions actively worked to educate GOP lawmakers with large numbers of union members in their districts. Rep. Jack Quinn (R-N.Y.) told *Congress Daily/AM* that more than two dozen Republican lawmakers opposed the bill, which ensured its defeat. @

Follow House and Senate bills on the Internet, where you can search by subject or bill number, at:  
<http://Thomas.loc.gov/bss/d106query.html>

# Expanding the Federal Hate Crimes Law

JOSEPH ILETO, A LOS ANGELES LETTER CARRIER, WAS KILLED LAST AUGUST by a gunman who earlier in the day shot at children in a Jewish community center. Later, the gunman said he killed Ileto simply because he worked for the government and was a minority.

Under federal law, Ileto's killer can be prosecuted for committing a hate crime. But had Ileto been gay and white like UAW Local 372 member Ron Woods, who was assaulted by a co-worker at Daimler-Chrysler's Trenton plant in 1992, his attacker could not be charged with a federal hate crime. Nor could Bill Whitmire's attacker. Whitmire, a heterosexual married father, was brutally beaten because he worked with Woods. Current federal hate crime laws only apply if the victim is involved in a federally protected act such as voting or applying for a loan—or, in Ileto's case, delivering mail—and only if the act is based on a person's race, color, national origin or religion.

These are not isolated cases. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported 7,755 hate crimes in 1998. Of those, 16.2 percent were committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, 17.9 percent were based on religion and 55.7 percent on race. Some hate crimes fall into more than one category. For example, two of the men alleged to have burned three synagogues in Northern California last summer also are suspects in the killing of two gay men.

"It's obvious that hatred knows no bounds," says Winnie Stachelberg, political director of the Human Rights Campaign and co-chair of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) Hate Crimes Task Force, which includes the AFL-CIO. "Perpetrators of hate crimes are 'equal opportunity' criminals and often choose their targets across differing communities, whether it be based on race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or disability."

Hate crimes often are fostered by intolerance and attempts to find a scapegoat—

such as blaming minorities for economic insecurity, Stachelberg says.

In a statement condemning the Ileto murders, the AFL-CIO said, "These hate crimes take place at a point in our history when working families face economic insecurity and wide disparities, and there is a tendency to place blame on racial and ethnic groups, women and members of the gay and lesbian communities. The atmosphere of intolerance—which has been advanced by English-only legislation and by measures that are anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action—fuels the fires of hate and explodes in tragedies like the Los Angeles shootings."

The federation, LCCR and civil rights activists are supporting the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, S. 622, introduced by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.). The bill would expand the current definition of hate crimes to include acts against people based on gender, sexual orientation or disability. It also would remove the requirement that the victim be involved in a federally protected act. The bill is stalled in a subcommittee. A competing bill, introduced by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), would only drop the federally protected act requirement, but would not expand coverage.

More than 40 states have hate crime laws on the books. But only 21 have laws that cover crimes committed because of a person's sexual orientation or disability; 22 have laws covering crimes based on gender.

AFL-CIO constituency groups strongly support passage of tough hate crimes laws. But enacting a strong law is just the first step toward ending vicious acts of violence, says Nancy Wohlfarth, co-chair of the AFL-CIO constituency group Pride at Work, a



AP PHOTO/VICTORIA ARCHO

**In memory:** Sonny Benitez, brother-in-law of slain Letter Carrier member Joseph Ileto, holds a banner honoring Ileto during a Walk for Unity march in Los Angeles last October.

national organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers and allies. "The union movement must join with other social efforts to develop strategies for a national policy that will tell hate-mongers 'not in our country,'" she told a national conference on hate crimes co-sponsored by the National Jewish Labor Committee and the six AFL-CIO constituency groups last October.

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists President William Lucy called for the union movement to get involved in fighting hate crimes with as much vigor as union members fight for better wages and working conditions. "This is an important issue and we need to make our voices heard," he said.

*Act now! Ask your members to contact their U.S. senators and representative and urge them to stand up against hate and hate crimes by supporting the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, S. 622. For more information on what your union can do, call Susana Gomez in the AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Department at 202-637-5271, e-mail her at sgomez@aflcio.org or contact your international union's civil rights department.*

—James B. Parks

## Cyber Strategies

**A**irline passengers heading to high-tech Silicon Valley are accustomed to carrying laptop computers to their planes. But at Los Angeles International Airport recently, the "computers" walked up to them.

Donning oversized cardboard computer monitor costumes, union activists with the Respect at LAX coalition kicked off a cyber campaign in January to get the word out that AHL Services/Argenbright is thwarting airport security screeners' efforts to win a voice at work. The campaign also hit the send button on another e-tactic: cyber-leafleting. When potential customers of AHL's new e-commerce order-processing and shipping fulfillment services typed certain keywords (such as e-fulfillment, fulfillment services and AHL Services) into the popular Yahoo! search engine, they were greeted with a banner ad for the campaign's website, [www.un-fulfilled.com](http://www.un-fulfilled.com).

Un-fulfilled.com provides information about the workers' struggle at the airport and describes the company's questionable business practices.

"This is our attempt to bring a worker message to a new forum," says Mike Garcia, president of SEIU Local 1877, a partner with Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 814 in the Respect at LAX campaign. In mid-February, Yahoo yanked the union's message off the site, claiming it violated the company's policy.

"AHL has used illegal threats to silence these workers, and Yahoo's decision to pull the ad is an attempt to silence them once again," says Garcia. @



**E-strategies:** Dressed as computers, Respect at LAX activists kick off a cyber campaign to support airport security screeners.

## NOT TAKING ATTACKS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SITTING DOWN

**W**hen Florida Gov. Jeb Bush (R) tried to end affirmative action in the state with his "One Florida" executive order, he didn't anticipate a sit-in launched by Longshoremen member and state Rep. Tony Hill (D) and state Sen. Kendrick Meek (D)—or the public support behind the two lawmakers.

After Meek and Hill, secretary-treasurer of the Florida AFL-CIO, asked Bush to rescind the plan, the governor responded, "you'd better get some blankets." They did just that, spending the night in the lieutenant governor's office, where they were joined by reporters. After Bush realized they weren't going to leave, he was caught on television issuing another order: "Kick their a---s out," a remark that was widely televised and which his office later said referred only to the reporters.

The next morning, more than 100 supporters, including dozens of union leaders, sang civil rights songs outside Bush's office. At least a dozen Florida Department of Law Enforcement agents crowded into the room and announced that everyone in the office was trespassing. The agents forced everyone except Hill and Meek



**Taking a stand:** A sit-in launched by Longshoremen member Tony Hill (left) and state Sen. Kendrick Meek helped spark statewide action to fight Florida GOP Gov. Jeb Bush's attack on affirmative action.

to leave, ushering the reporters down a corridor lined with police officers. Barbara DeVane, a 57-year-old grandmother and National Organization for Women member, refused to leave and said she was dragged by police from the office, according to the *Florida Times-Union*. "They said, 'Make it easy on yourself,'" says DeVane, showing red marks on her arm where the police grabbed her. "I've never done anything the easy way."

After 25 hours, Bush agreed to appoint a 15-member legislative panel to hold public hearings in Jacksonville, Miami and Tallahassee, which thousands of workers from throughout the state attended (see story, page 4). @

## UNION LINE

### Remodel the Union Way

**P**lanning for a home remodeling project? If repairing or redecorating a bathroom or kitchen is on your drawing board, plan on using union-made fixtures and furniture. Listed below are the name brands of sinks, tubs, showers, faucets, hot tubs, cabinets and plumbing supplies made by members of the Glass, Molders, Pot-

tery and Plastics Workers, IUE, Steelworkers and the UAW.

**Sinks, toilets, showers, spas, bath tubs, whirlpool tubs:** Advance Pressure Castings, American Standard, Briggs Industries, Crane, Eljer, Gerber, Guaranteed Specialties, Jacuzzi, Kilgore Plumbing, Kohler, Kokomo Sanitary Pottery, Mansfield Plumbing, Polar, Universal-Rundle.

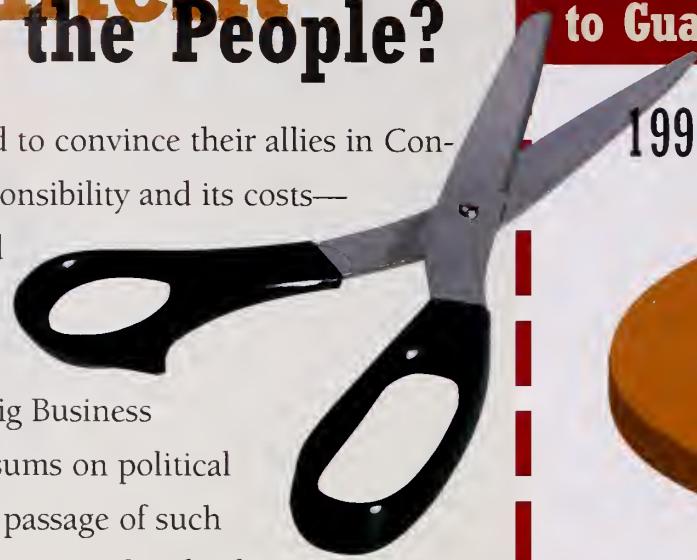
**Faucets, shower heads, hand-held showers:** American Standard, Central Brass, Gerber, Moen, Speakman, Sterling.

**Bath cabinets:** NuTone, Kemper. **Ventilation fans:** NuTone. @



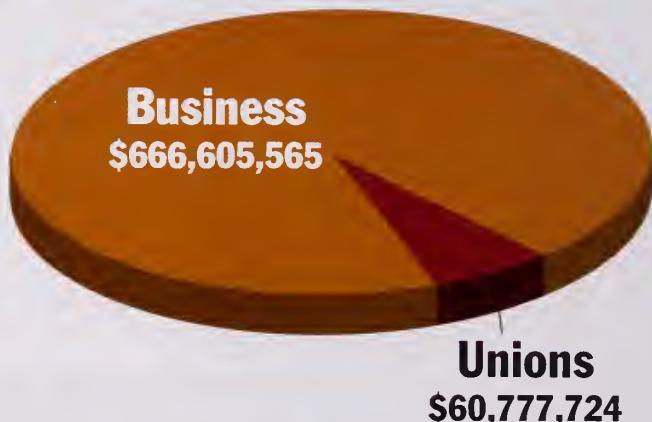
# Government for the People?

Corporations work hard to convince their allies in Congress to shift social responsibility and its costs—in the form of taxes and health care coverage, for example—to workers and communities. Big Business spends unprecedented sums on political contributions to ensure passage of such laws as mammoth corporate tax breaks that come at the expense of working families. But by taking a greater role in choosing who is elected to public office, working families can ensure government is responsive to their needs.



## Big Business Contributes Big Bucks to Guarantee its Corporate Agenda

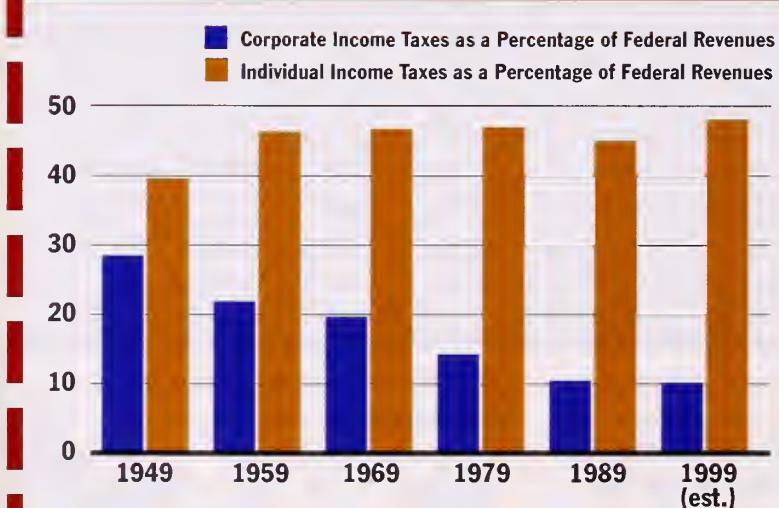
### 1998 Campaign Contributions



To counterbalance the enormous power that corporations wield to further their agenda, working families must take a greater role in choosing public officials who are responsive to working families.

Source: The Center for Responsive Politics

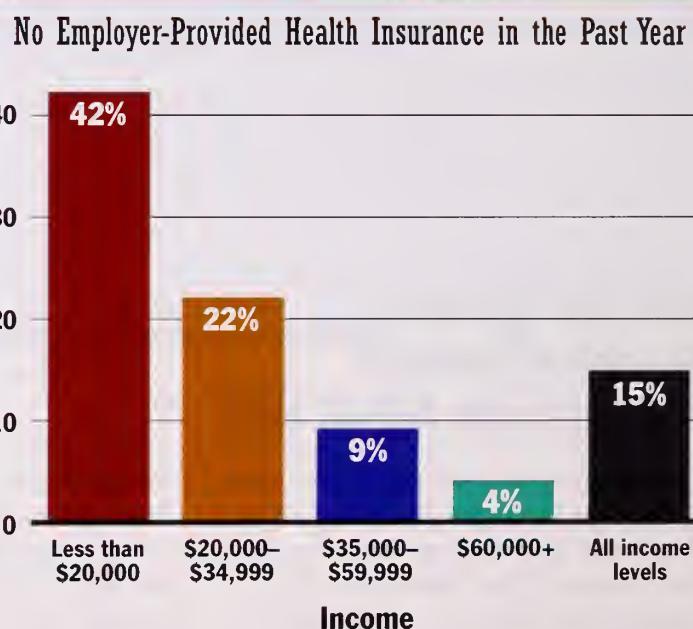
## Corporations Pay Less and Less in Taxes



In the past 50 years, corporate income taxes as a portion of federal revenues have declined by almost two-thirds, while the share represented by individual income taxes has risen by nearly a fourth. Corporations promote lower business taxes, deregulation, free trade and an unregulated labor market, and fight spending for health care, education and other working family issues.

Source: Budget of the United States, Fiscal Year 2000.

## Business Cuts Health Corners for the Lowest-Paid Workers



Working full-time is no guarantee of health care coverage—one in three full-time workers with annual incomes less than \$35,000 is uninsured.

Source: The Commonwealth Fund 1999 National Survey of Workers' Health Insurance

## E X H I B I T

## NYC Labor 2000 Festival

The New York City Central Labor Council will kick off the NYC Labor 2000 Festival, 12 weeks of educational and cultural events, with the exhibit *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: 100 Years of Labor in New York City*, a collection of photographs, artifacts and oral histories (see review of companion book, below). The exhibit, at the Museum of the City of New York, features more than 120 photographs. The show is an expanded version of a traveling exhibit created by the New York City Central Labor Council and the Robert F. Wagner Archives that has been displayed at union halls, schools, community centers and government institutions since its opening at City Hall last year.

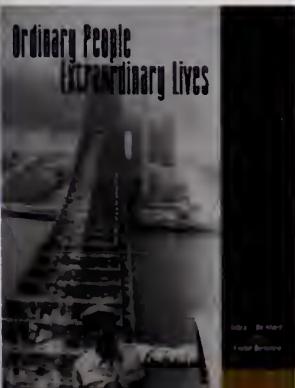
AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and labor council President Brian McLaughlin will open the museum exhibit April 15, joined by the New York Labor Chorus.

The labor council's history committee, working with unions and retiree, community and religious groups, is planning events to involve workers and their families in the extraordinary history of the city's union members. Events include a discussion of job safety issues augmented by a documentary on the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Co. fire and a Farm Workers fiesta with UFW Secretary-Treasurer Dolores Huerta. Local unions are encouraged to schedule their meetings at the museum's 248-seat auditorium so members may tour the exhibit. To schedule meetings, call Steve Turtell at the museum: 212-534-1672, ext 207. @

## P U B L I C A T I O N S

*Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: A Pictorial History of Working People in New York City*,

by Debra E. Bernhardt and Rachel Bernstein, chronicles the workers who built New York City in the 20th century through seldom-seen photographs. The images comple-



## Four Weeks for Justice, 2000!

The heat is rising as the AFL-CIO's Union Summer 2000 approaches. For four weeks, some 200 activists will be on the front lines of the union movement working in campaigns across the country to help workers gain a voice at work. In the past four years, the nearly 2,000 Union Summer participants have organized public employees in Puerto Rico and poultry workers in the South, as well as mobilized members for community rallies nationwide. Participants will earn a stipend of \$210 per week, with on-site housing and transportation provided. Application deadline is June 1. If you know someone who wants to make a difference, encourage him or her to apply. Also, find out about the new Seminary Summer program for future religious leaders (see story, page 6). Call 800-952-2550 or download an application and more information from the website at [www.aflcio.org/unionsummer](http://www.aflcio.org/unionsummer). Unions wishing to host interns should call Nancy Harvin at 202-639-6228 or e-mail her at [nharvin@aflcio.org](mailto:nharvin@aflcio.org). @

ment oral histories of longshoremen, immigrants in sweatshops, office workers, store clerks and others who fought to form the city's unions. \$29.95. Available from New York University Press in April, 800-996-6987.

*Voices from the Front Lines: Organizing Immigrant Workers in Los Angeles*, edited and with an introduction by Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong, presents the new

face of unionism in California through the experiences and reflections of five Los Angeles union leaders who have spearheaded the hard work of organizing the city's large pool of immigrant workers. Profiled are leaders from Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 11, UNITE, SEIU/Justice for Janitors, the Machinists' American Racing campaign and the Carpenters' drywall campaign. Milkman is a professor in the UCLA Department of Sociology and Wong is director of the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education. English and Spanish versions are combined in one book. \$7. To order, send checks payable to "UC Regents" to: UCLA Labor Center, Box 951478, School of Public Policy, Los Angeles, Calif. 90095.

*Labor Guide to Labor Law*, by attorney Bruce Feldacker, is the fourth edition of this comprehensive guide and

labor studies textbook on private-sector labor law. Extensively updated and expands earlier text to cover new issues and recent developments in labor law. New material includes provisions of the Railway Labor Act. Feldacker, a St. Louis attorney, represents unions, pension funds and workers and has taught labor law at several colleges. He currently is an adjunct faculty member at the National Labor College. \$80. Available through Prentice Hall at 800-643-5506. For use as a class text or to obtain a complimentary instructor's exam copy, contact the appropriate Prentice Hall college or university sales representative through your campus bookstore or directly at [www.prenhall.com](http://www.prenhall.com). @

## W E B S I T I N G

[www.media.utah.edu/joehill](http://www.media.utah.edu/joehill)—This website complements the video, *Joe Hill*, produced by television station

KUED in Salt Lake City, about the life of Joe Hill, an International Workers of the World organizer executed by the state of Utah in 1915. Interviews with authors and historians featured in the video are available here, along with a list of historical documents, photographs, letters and other memorabilia. The video costs \$19.95 (plus shipping, handling and tax, where applicable). To order, call KUED VideoFinders at 800-343-4727. @



THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES



Come to Washington  
in April to demand

# Global Fairness

Working families are mobilizing to make the global economy work for people, not just profits. We're saying "No More!" to corporate-driven trade and investment systems that drive down global standards for workers while destroying good jobs. And we're demanding a global economic system that protects workers' rights and the environment, promotes democracy and reduces poverty—an economy that works for working people.

## Join us in April!

April 12, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., lobbying  
Rally at noon

Gather on the steps of the U.S. Capitol and tell Congress, "No Blank Check for China!" Rally and lobby against proposals to grant China—a notorious human and workers' rights abuser—permanent Normal Trade Relations status, which would end the current system of reviewing China's human rights and trade record each year.

**April 9, noon, on the national Mall between 4th and 7th Sts., N.W.**

Join people of faith in calling for debt relief for developing countries. Many developing countries are so saddled with debt they cannot meet their citizens' basic needs and fund the building blocks of strong development—education, health care and infrastructure. Jubilee 2000/USA is part of a worldwide movement to cancel the crushing international debt of impoverished countries in the new millennium.

Come to Washington in April to demand Global Fairness! Sign up today through the AFL-CIO Global Fairness website: [www.aflcio.org/trade/global\\_fairness.html](http://www.aflcio.org/trade/global_fairness.html); e-mail: [global@aflcio.org](mailto:global@aflcio.org); or call: 202-637-5359.



# America at Work

## The NEW Student Activism

EDUCATE.  
AGITATE.  
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### ALSO INSIDE:

**Waging a Campaign  
for Global Fairness**

**Working Women  
Conference 2000**

# VOICES

## IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

100 YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND SUCCESS, CONT.



**"BEING A UNION MEMBER** and activist for nearly 30 years, [with] many a picket line and demonstration under my belt, I can't let this one go by without some mention or praise! The January issue of America@work is one of the most comprehensive pieces of journalism I've encountered. It is certainly true. A picture is worth a thousand words. Without our history we have no claim to our future."—Don Hyatt, Boilermakers Local 92

### "I WOULD LIKE TO COMPLIMENT YOU

(January 2000) of America@work. The photographic essay is a great historic reminder of the events that have shaped the American labor movement. *Good work!!!*"—Frank Snyder, special assistant to the director, Northeast Region, AFL-CIO



**"YOUR JANUARY 2000 ISSUE** chronicling events of the past 100 years of labor history was excellent. The photos, quotes and thumbnail summaries of events made the issue a definite keeper, and I thank you for that. I was, however, puzzled by the glaring omission of any reference to the Industrial Workers of the World. The caption accompanying the photo of Joe Hill—arguably the IWW's most famous member—said nothing about how his affiliation with the union made him a prime target during the government's war on organized labor. The IWW planted the seeds for many of the rights and benefits many workers take for granted today, not the least of which is the eight-hour workday."—Frank Lehn, AWPPW Local 5, Carmas, Wash.



**"LET ME COMPLIMENT YOU** on the [January 2000] issue; it is great! I am scheduled to lecture at my daughter's high school on social justice. I would like to use the issue as a tool for the students."—Mike Stout, Laborers Midwest Region Office, Springfield, Ill.

# America@work

April 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 4

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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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and our

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and collective power

in our

**communities@work**,

that's when you see

# America@work



AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in **America@work**.



### Say What?

What is your union doing to reach out to young activists?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's **Say What?** Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

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### Here's What You Say ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS GOTTEN INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT FOR AN ERGONOMICS RULE:

"UFCW Local 655 has taken an active role in addressing the disabling conditions facing workers on the job. Today, the union negotiates at the bargaining table to address both workplace and community hazards created by bad ergonomic design. Members of the local take to the state capital and federal government both testimony and lobbying efforts to secure better working conditions and to eliminate disabling repetitive motion injuries, reduced productivity, pain, life-threatening exposure to pollution and fatalities at the workplace."—Judy Davidson, vice president and director of special products, Food and Commercial Workers Local 655, St. Louis

Denise Mitchell (Assistant to the President for Public Affairs); Donna M. Jablanski (Publications Director); Tula Cannell (Editor); Mike Hall, David Kamerer, James B. Parks (Assistant Editors); Arlee C. Green, Laureen Lazarovici (Staff Writers); Calleen M. O'Neill (Proofreader/Copy Editor). Design: The Magazine Group Inc.

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## Black TV Actors 'Ghettoized'

African American characters on television are, to a large degree, "ghettoized" by show type, network and day of the week on which the show airs, according to a study by the Screen Actors Guild.

"This study shows that people of color still are not being portrayed in a realistic fashion," says AFL-CIO Vice President Sumi Haru, SAG first vice president. "I believe showing diversity on the screen would increase viewership and sales at the box office."

"The African American Television Report" found:

- Slightly more than half of all African American characters (50.5 percent) appear in situation comedies, compared with less than one-third (30 percent) of all white characters.
- African American characters are under-represented on NBC and FOX, and most are not central to the program story line.
- Only 27.3 percent of FOX programs feature African Americans as series regulars. In contrast, 66.7 percent of CBS programs include at least one African American regular character.

• African American characters are concentrated on the UPN and WB networks. Together, the two fledgling networks produced less than one-third of the 384 episodes covered in the report, but account for more than 44 percent of all African American characters in prime time.

• Monday and Friday are "black nights" in prime time. The seven predominantly African American sitcoms on those nights account for more than half of all prime-time African American characters.

A copy of the report is available online at [www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org). ☐

RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

**Prime time: "People of color are not being portrayed in a realistic fashion" on television, says Sumi Haru, SAG first vice president.**



## May 13: NALC Food Drive Will Hit Home

Thousands of workers and their families will participate in the nation's largest one-day collection of food for those less fortunate May 13 by leaving nonperishable food items at their mailboxes for letter carriers to pick up.

The Letter Carriers union says that preparations are under way to make the Eighth Annual NALC Food Drive the most successful ever. Despite recent publicity about the nation's instant Internet millionaires, the need for food this year is great—more than 30 million children, women and men suffer from hunger each day in the United States, according to Betty Beene, president of the United Way of America.

The drive takes place during a slow period of volunteer donations to food banks and "makes a crucial difference in the lives of millions of hungry children and adults during the summer months," says NALC President Vincent Sombrotto. Last year, letter carriers collected 58.4 million pounds of food, which was distributed to local agencies. Already, more than 1,400 NALC branches across the country have joined in the 2000 national drive. To find out whether your letter carrier is participating, call your local post office or ask your carrier. ☐

## Two Organizers Honored With Youngdahl Award

Organizers Vonnie Hines and Willie Jones were awarded the Youngdahl Southern Organizer Award for their tireless efforts on behalf of working families. The AFL-CIO Organizing Institute presented the award to Hines and Jones, who helped 8,500 workers at three Pillowtex Cannon plants in

North Carolina gain a voice on the job with UNITE in 1999.

Hines was instrumental in carrying on the organizing efforts at Pillowtex Cannon after losses in 1985 and 1991, and came out of retirement to work on the 1997 and 1999 campaigns. The National Labor Relations Board held that the employer's misconduct had marred earlier elections.

Jones, active in the civil rights movement, volunteered to talk with Pillowtex Cannon workers before becoming a full-time



ROBERT FOX

JENNIFER WARBURG/IMPACT VISUALS

**Heroes: Vonnie Hines (left) and Willie Jones were honored for their extraordinary organizing efforts.**

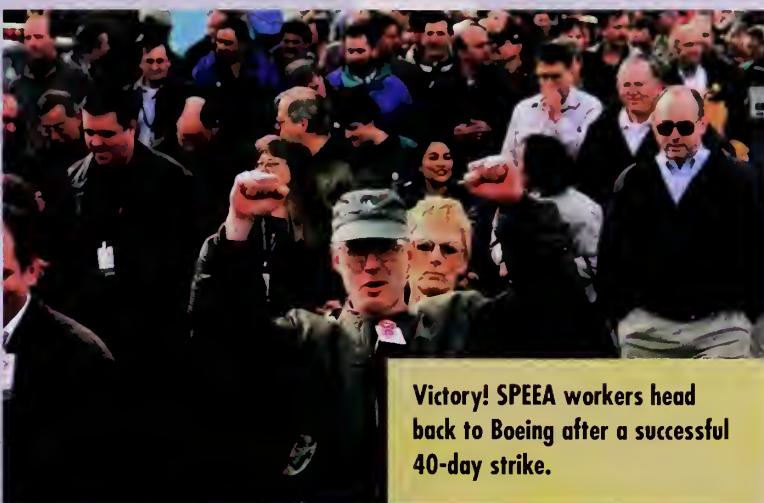
organizer in 1988, working on the Pillowtex Cannon and other campaigns in the South. She now is manager of UNITE's Alabama district.

The Youngdahl Award, given at the AFL-CIO Executive Council's February meeting, is named for the late James E. Youngdahl, an organizer in the South who became a union lawyer and fighter for workers' freedom to choose a union. The award honors the "unsung heroes" of union organizing in the South. ☐



## SPOTLIGHT

### Success in Seattle



The nation's largest private-sector, white-collar strike ended March 20 when some 20,000 victorious engineers and technicians marched back to work at Boeing Co. plants in Seattle after winning a three-year contract that beat back company demands for health benefit concessions. The new pact provides \$2,500 in bonuses and 3 percent annual pay increases, with 4 percent for technicians the first year.

Backed by the entire union movement and community, the members of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace/Professional and Technical Engineers Local 2001 stood strong during their 40-day strike.

The outpouring of union and community support was "overwhelming" and "let us know we were doing the right thing," says Linda Gilmore, a flight test engineer and member of the negotiating team. "We learned what a real union means and what it is to sacrifice."

Machinists Lodge 751, whose members also work at Boeing, trained picket line captains; Teamsters members cooked hot breakfasts in a mobile kitchen; and many unions provided food, picket-line support and financial aid. One IAM member hauled 35 truckloads of wood for the strikers' burn barrels (which SPEEA members engineered to comply with U.S. emissions standards). SEIU District 1199 nurses were among those who joined—and sang—on the picket line. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka participated in rallies, and Trumka led the marathon final negotiations with Boeing.

Charles Bofferding, SPEEA's executive director, says the union support made the difference. It also proves "there is a spot in the union movement for professional employees, and it's a very good spot," he says, adding the AFL-CIO and its affiliates "had nothing to do with the start of this strike, but had everything to do with its end." @

of historical documents stored there were dumped in a landfill. The loss spurred a union-community drive to raise funds for the Barre Historical Society to purchase the building and restore it.

To contribute to the restoration effort, contact Nancy Trask, Barre Historical Society president, P.O. Box 496, Barre, Vt. 05641; phone: 802-476-7463; e-mail: Nancy0131@aol.com. @

### Driving Home a Voice at Work

About 50 port truck drivers from throughout the East Coast convoyed their tractors to Washington, D.C., March 22 and joined

200 Teamsters and other union members and allies on Capitol Hill to demand a Port Driver Bill of Rights. The truckers, who haul containers from ports to warehouses and railheads, are seeking to join IBT to win respect, fair wages, pensions, health benefits and safety protection. But because most are classified as independent contractors, they are unable to join unions.

"We've got to go union. Without a legal binding contract and the resources like the Teamsters have, we can't stand up to the ports and steamship lines," says Jim Stewart, a Savannah, Ga., driver. The rally also spotlighted soaring diesel fuel prices and the anti-trust exemptions granted to foreign steamship lines that enable them to form cartels and set rates, which American firms are not allowed to do. @



built the original hall in 1900.

Members of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 693 are installing donated plumbing fixtures and Electrical Workers Local 300 apprentices are rewiring the building; their local union donated \$5,000 for supplies. The Vermont State Labor Council, central labor bodies and local and international unions also are contributing to the project. The hall is on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places and recently was nominated to become a National Historic Landmark.



**Rebuilding history:** Members of the Electrical Workers and Plumbers and Pipe Fitters volunteer their time to repair and renovate the Old Labor Hall.

Building trades members are volunteering their skills and raising construction funds for the Old Labor Hall in Barre, Vt., today—just as union stonecutters and quarry workers

hosted union meetings and community events and housed a cooperative grocery store and bakery. The building was awaiting demolition in the mid-1990s when truckloads

## Unions, farmers Rally for Fair Farm Policies

**M**ore than 1,000 family farmers—many from the National Farmers Union—rural and community activists and union allies blasted Republican-backed farm legislation that cuts price supports for small farmers and favors agribusiness conglomerates at a March 21 rally in Washington, D.C.

"Our current farm policy has been driven entirely by giant agribusiness conglomerates—corporate farms if you will—that have about as much relation to family farms as Microsoft does to the corner lemonade stand," AFSCME President Gerald McEntee told the gathering.

Passed in 1996, the so-called

Freedom to Farm Act should be renamed the "Freedom to Fail Act," says Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernard Brommer. He and some 40 Minnesota union members made the trip to Capitol Hill to support farmers and urge that the nation's farm policies be revamped.

"It's had a devastating impact on small family farmers. All our economic future is linked to small family farmers," he says.

The Minnesota Farmers Union stood by the union movement in Seattle last November during the World Trade Organization meeting, Brommer says, and recently voted to oppose Congress' efforts to grant permanent Normal Trade Relations to China.

For more information, visit the NFU website at [www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org). ☐

## Union Semester

**A**ll the good things about summer—long evenings, fresh peaches—pass too quickly. For Norelis Santiago, a labor studies major at Queens College in New York, the same was true for Union Summer. Santiago went to Puerto Rico last year as part of the AFL-CIO's training program for young activists and was inspired to sign up for the first round of the New York Union Semester program. Union Semester, co-sponsored by Queens College and the New York City Central Labor Council, now enrolls 18 college students who intern at local unions and social justice organizations while taking courses on union issues at the Queens College Worker Education Extension Center in Manhattan.

Santiago now is an organizing intern at AFT Local 3882, which represents clerical workers at New York University who currently are getting ready for contract talks. "I'm helping to recruit members, create committees, survey workers about their concerns and get people involved," says Santiago, who hopes to become a union organizer. "I'm ecstatic I can be part of it." Other students are interning with programs through AFSCME, Communications Workers, SEIU, RWDSU, UNITE and the New York Committee on Safety and Health.

"I hope that some of these students plan to work with unions after they graduate," says Joanne Bunuan, the program's coordinator and a graduate of the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute. "For those who don't, I hope they will be union advocates and supporters."

For more information, call 212-827-0200 or visit [www.qc.edu/workered/html/union\\_semester.html](http://www.qc.edu/workered/html/union_semester.html). ☐

## Stopping Child Labor in Brazil

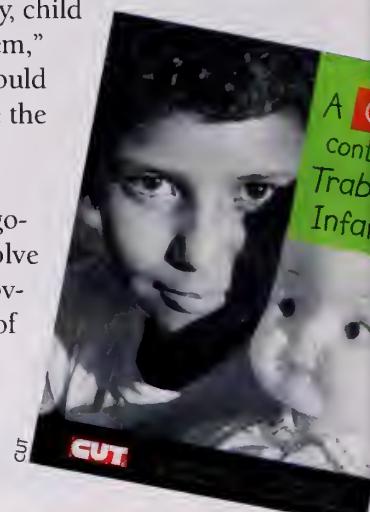
**F**ive years ago, 3.8 million child workers toiled in Brazil's fields, factories and mines. But through education and coalition-building, the country's major union federations helped secure a government program to encourage poor families to keep their kids out of work and in school. Since then, UNICEF reports, nearly 1 million children have put down their tools and picked up their books.

But that still leaves 2.8 million children deprived of their childhoods, says Liliane Fiuza Lima, a leading activist on child labor issues in Brazil. "When we're talking about children in Brazil, we are talking about starting at age 3 or 4—we're talking about babies," she says.

Lima says poverty, inequality and even culture feed the demand for child exploitation. "Until very recently, child labor was seen as a solution, not a problem," she says. "The idea was that the child should help the family, and work would ennoble the child as a human being."

Multinationals don't hire child labor directly, preferring to use contractors as go-betweens, Lima says. Her strategy to involve unions, congregations, businesses and government and reveal the corrupted chain of production restored hope to hundreds of thousands of working families.

"Everybody is entitled to a full life," she says, "and the child is the initial point for human development." ☐



## Swamp Romp

**M**obilizing around AFGE's SWAMP (Stop Wasting America's Money on Privatization) campaign, nearly 2,000 federal workers rallied at the U.S. Capitol Feb. 29. They called for passage of legislation to suspend contracting-out at federal agencies until criteria such as tracking costs and savings from contracted services and requiring public- and private-sector competition are met. Profit-driven corporate contractors "can't compete with public employees whose only priority is reliable, accountable services," says AFGE President Bobby Harnage. ☐



JOCELYN AUGUSTINO



## Kentucky Unions on the March

More than 5,000 union members rallied Feb. 23 on the steps of the Kentucky state capitol for passage of a state collective bargaining law for public employees and reform of workers' compensation.

*"We made our voices heard in Frankfort, and we'll do it again and again until we gain fairness for state employees and justice for injured workers," said state federation*

**President William Londigan and Secretary-Treasurer Chris Sanders in a joint statement. Gov. Paul Patton (D), who fought with the unions over workers' comp three years ago, told the rally he now supports stronger laws to protect injured workers and will "push to the last day I hold this office" for public-employee collective bargaining. @**

## Workers Give GE a Better Idea

**S**ome 40,000 General Electric workers showed their solidarity on the job with fliers, buttons and stickers March 2, spreading the word to "GEt Up, Stand Up to GE."

The one-day mobilization was the first in a series of demonstrations by the 14 unions in the GE Coordinated Bargaining Committee (CBC) to mobilize for national contract negotiations, which begin at the end of May. GE retirees have scheduled a series of actions in mid-April; bargaining rallies are scheduled across the country this spring.

Employment security, health care and pension benefits are

workers' top concerns. GE's pension fund includes a \$24.7 billion surplus, yet the company's nearly 200,000 retirees—who receive an average of \$700 a month—have not received any pension adjustments in more than four years.

More than 130 delegates from 20 countries took part in the CBC's world conference of GE unions in Washington, D.C., March 22 and 23, co-hosted with the International Metalworkers' Federation, to address the impact of GE's globalization strategy on workers and unions around the world.

For more information, visit [www.gecontract2000.com](http://www.gecontract2000.com). @

## Get Set for 7 Days in June

Union members and their allies are joining in a series of actions nationwide June 10–17 to spotlight employers' war on workers.

Last year, hundreds of union members took part in rallies, candlelight vigils and "freedom bus tours" to worksites, and held forums with lawmakers, such as the New York Central Labor Council's meeting with Sen. Charles Schumer (D), who pledged to support a voice at work.

To find out how you can get involved, call 800-848-3021 or visit [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork). @

## OUT FRONT

**A**t the incredible AFL-CIO Working Women Conference 2000 in Chicago (see page 19), union women from all across the country joined to talk about how to build a stronger movement for workers everywhere to have a voice at work.

Dita Sari, a former political prisoner who chairs the National Front for Indonesian Labor Struggles, asked a provocative question at the conference: "How can workers compete in a 'fair market' that's already been purchased by giant multinational corporations?"

The economic reforms designed to attract global capital to Indonesia wreak massive unemployment and displacement, she said, and swing the door wide open to multinational corporations hungry to exploit cheap labor.

Today, the same spirit of greed and contempt for workers and their communities that created America's Rust Belts is shaping our global economy. Is it inconvenient to pay survival wages here at home? No problem, set up production in Indonesia, China or Mexico.

Working families are taking a strong stand against a global economic system that rewards companies for abusing workers, despoiling the environment and encouraging government repression of basic freedoms in our new Campaign for Global Fairness (see page 8).

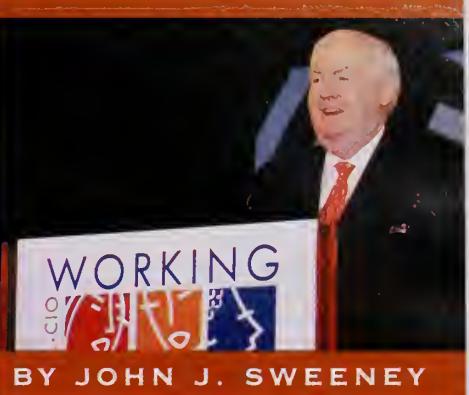
On April 12 at the U.S. Capitol, some 10,000 union and human rights activists will gather to demand that Congress refuse to grant China permanent Normal Trade Relations status, scrapping their annual review of China's trade and human rights practices. And when members of Congress return to their home districts, working families will greet them there, too.

The battle over permanent NTR for China is only one of a series of fights we will face in coming years as we campaign for global fairness. This is a long-haul struggle. The Chinese government's oppression of workers, and the resulting ability of multinationals to produce wealth from slave wages and sickening working conditions, are symptomatic of trends throughout the developing world.

Especially since this is a long-term battle, I am heartened by the new generation of students seeding activism on campuses across the country (see page 12). Each time these charged-up young people take on a recalcitrant university administration over sweatshops or wages or the freedom of graduate employees to choose union membership, they're gaining skills and experience in winning social and economic justice. Just as members of my generation adopted a lasting ethic of advocacy on picket lines and in civil rights marches, these inspiring young people are launching lifelong commitments to improving life for working people, here and abroad.

Long-term, committed activism for economic justice—this is the "capital" working families will use to buy back our rightful place in the global economy. @

## A Stand for Global Fairness



RONALD GOULD  
BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# Waging a Campaign for

# Global

# Fairness

BY DAVID KAMERAS

**W**hen nearly 40,000 union members, members of consumer and religious groups, civil rights activists and environmentalists from the United States and dozens of other countries came together in Seattle last year to draw the link between trade, workers' and human rights and environmental protection, they captured the world's attention with their energy and unity.

"Workers at home saw their union sisters and brothers confront the institutions of the new global economy, insisting that it's wrong to ignore workers' rights," says Tom Huddleston, president of the Big Sky (Mont.) Central Labor Council. "The world's been ignoring them, and union members are saying, 'pay attention to workers' needs.' "

Now activists are carrying the spirit of Seattle into a multiyear Campaign for Global Fairness to educate union members and the public about the global economy, build solidarity among working families and hold Big Business accountable.

Working families are taking their message to Congress, demanding global economic justice through such traditional grassroots activities as demonstrations and direct lobbying and with new strategies that include large-scale coalition-building and corporate campaigns. The global campaign's immediate focus is blocking permanent Normal Trade Relations (formerly Most Favored Nation) status for China and debt relief for developing countries.

On April 9, workers will join other people of faith, students and human rights activists on the national Mall in Washington, D.C., in a rally organized by Jubilee 2000/USA, a part of a global, faith-based movement fighting for debt relief for developing countries that cannot meet their citizens' basic needs or provide the basis for critically needed development. Three days later, thousands of union members will gather outside the U.S. Capitol to tell Congress "No Blank Check for China!" and to lobby against granting China permanent NTR status and abolishing annual reviews of that country's trade and human rights record.



Spirit of Seattle: Union members in La Crosse, Wis., say "no" to permanent Normal Trade Relations with China.



For the past 30 years, multinational corporations used the emerging global economy to attack working standards, free themselves from regulations and avoid responsibilities to their communities and workers. By requiring poorer countries to pay crippling debts, "reforming" economies through increased market "flexibility" and rewarding despotic governments with economic benefits, business-dominated financial institutions retarded sustainable development and democracy and encouraged the flight of capital that destroys American jobs.

The ability of many developing countries to meet their citizens' basic needs and fund the building blocks of strong development—such as education, HIV/AIDS prevention and infrastructure—is crippled by enormous debt burdens.

One example is Zambia, which borrowed heavily to finance development projects. Zambia now devotes more than 30 percent of its budget to service its debt and spends only 10 percent on social services—in a country where 20 percent of the population is HIV-positive and half have no access to safe drinking water.

The pressure of enormous debt encourages impoverished countries to bid against one another, enticing foreign investment with low wages and an unorganized workforce. This in turn undermines wages and job security in the United States and other industrialized countries.

Through the Campaign for Global Fairness, union members are raising public awareness and igniting grassroots support needed to create a different world economy—one that respects workers' and human rights and the environment, not just the interests of multinational corporations. To achieve their objectives, activists are:



CHARLES KERNAGAN

**No Blank Check!** Chinese enterprises that rely on human rights abuses and forced prison labor undercut American jobs.

- 1. Educating union members and the general public about the global economy;**
- 2. Fighting for workers' rights in the international economy;**
- 3. Building international solidarity among working families, including alliances and strategies with workers and unions in developing countries; and,**
- 4. Holding multinational corporations accountable for their role in accelerating the race to the bottom.**

Hundreds of union members will participate in train-the-trainer sessions focusing on the global economy, a technique successfully used to build grassroots support in working families' struggle to strengthen Social Security. Working together, unionists and allied groups will seek a broad development agenda that, with the support of increased aid, can create equitable, sustainable and democratic economic growth. At the same time, they will seek to ensure corporate investments do not support Chinese enterprises that engage in human rights abuses or rely on forced prison labor.

#### **No Blank Check for China!**

Sandy Brooks, a member of Steelworkers Local 9443 in Owensboro, Ky., says Seattle's example "of people with different ideas coming together and changing things"

helped teach working families that they have a stake in economic justice around the world, including in China, whose government routinely outlaws dissent, represses unions and religious minorities and exploits prison laborers. "I think we should have a say in what's going on—how trade and human rights affect all of us," she says.

Brooks is outraged that Congress is considering granting China permanent NTR status, which would eliminate annual congressional reviews of that country's appalling human rights and trade record and worsen America's already lopsided bilateral trade deficit. The U.S. trade surplus with China, which has grown by 25 percent annually over the past decade, reached almost \$70 billion last year. To ensure that China stays on probation, activists are holding teach-ins, town hall meetings and rallies and contacting members of Congress.

In an early demonstration of workers' opposition to giving a blank check to China, hundreds turned out for a Feb. 26 rally in front of La Crosse (Wis.) Footwear to protest unfair trade policies that encouraged management to shift production to China. Supervisors permitted the protest because they "know that if more jobs go to China, they're going to lose their jobs too," says Jose Bucio, industrial field representative with the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO. "We can't compete with 13 cents an hour"—the wages of many Chinese workers.

A Feb. 25 U.S. State Department report found that China's human rights practices deteriorated last year, with widespread killings, torture, forced confessions, arbitrary arrests and detentions and violence against women. China not only has a blatant and ongoing human and workers' rights abuse record—it has broken every agreement signed with the United States in the past 10 years.

## **Here's What You Can Do for Global Fairness**

- Log onto [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy), the AFL-CIO's Global Fairness Campaign website that provides news about the congressional debate, results of the Peter D. Hart Research Associates poll and more.
- Attend the April 9 and 12 rallies and Lobby Day. Click on [http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/global\\_fairness.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/global_fairness.htm) for more information and to sign up.
- E-mail a letter to your senators and member of Congress from [www.aflcio.org/articles/china/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/articles/china/index.htm).
- Call the AFL-CIO Education Department if you are interested in train-the-trainer sessions to learn how to give presentations and conduct workshops on the global economy at 202-637-5147.
- Call your senators and representative in Congress at 202-224-3121, or when they are in their home districts on recess, and tell them "No Blank Check for China." ☐

# In South Africa, an Historic Meeting for the ICFTU

After 50 years of championing the concerns of the world's working families, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions opens its first quadrennial World Congress of the millennium this month in South Africa, where the organization waged one of its most significant struggles—ending apartheid.

Representing 125 million workers and 213 national trade union centers in 143 countries, more than 1,200 delegates will meet in Durban for "Globalising Social Justice in the 21st Century." There, they will set strategy on how best to boost the international union movement's influence on trade and social policy. By improving communication with the public, broadening national participation in such international campaigns as combating racial and gender discrimination and encouraging organizing, especially among women workers, the ICFTU plans to bring a stronger voice to the world's workers—tasks for which global solidarity and numerical strength are key.

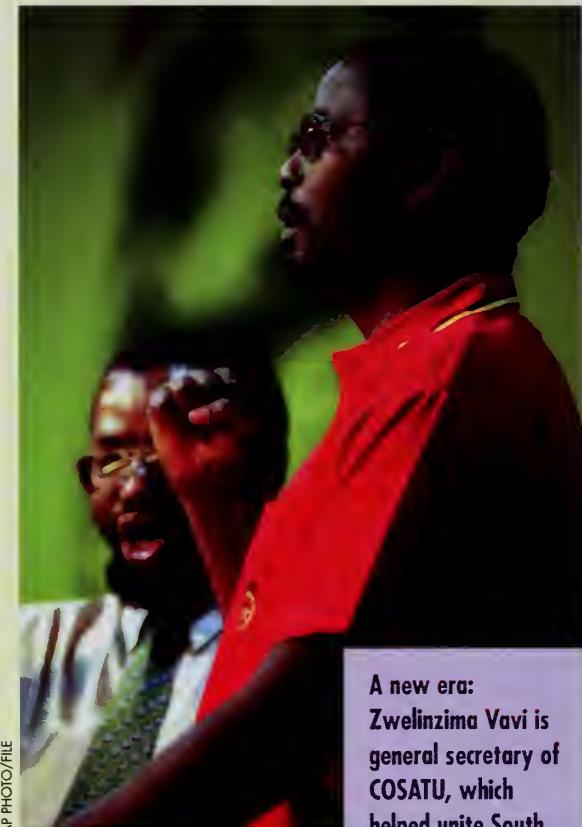
"Unions are at the heart of empowerment," says Juan Somavia, director-general of the International Labor Organization. "The ICFTU is the biggest empowerment institution in the world—125 million people empowered by the fact that they have the capacity to organize to defend themselves."

Since its creation in 1949, the ICFTU called for economic sanctions against the racist South African government. The first of those sanctions, an arms embargo, was initiated by the United Nations after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, in which police killed 69 demonstrators protesting laws controlling the free association and employment of blacks.

Working through its Coordinating Committee on South Africa (COCOSA), the ICFTU provided financial aid to South African unions and enabled South African trade unionists to exchange information with union members worldwide. Black trade unionists, united in 1985 by the founding of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, demanded continued sanctions—which ultimately led to free multiracial elections in 1994.

As citizens of a newly democratic country, black South African union members now are covered by collective bargaining. At the same time, they face such growing challenges as downsizing, contracting-out and job growth in the less unionized service sector, concerns similar to those faced by delegates to the ICFTU Congress from around the world.

"No matter how innovative, creative and responsive unions become in their approaches to organizing, the deterioration of the basis for protection for many workers' rights must be addressed by governments, nationally and internationally," says ICFTU General Secretary Bill Jordan. ☐



AP PHOTO/FILE

**A new era:**  
**Zwellinza Vavi is**  
**general secretary of**  
**COSATU, which**  
**helped unite South**  
**African trade**  
**unionists to suc-**  
**cessfully fight**  
**apartheid.**

"It is naive at best and complicit at worst for the United States to pretend that China will adhere to the rules if the U.S. gives up its annual review of China's human rights status. This is one of the most important forms of leverage the United States has to encourage China to do the right thing," says Harry Wu, a 19-year prisoner of conscience and now executive director of the Laogai Research Foundation, which gathers and disseminates information on the world's most extensive forced labor camp system.

The Economic Policy Institute predicts that by gaining greater access to world markets, China could double its U.S. trade surplus and cost American workers an additional 600,000 jobs—on top of the 800,000 already lost from the U.S. trade surplus with China.

## Public supports fair trade

Americans are wary of China's trade and rights practices (see page 11). According to a January survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, more than 60 percent of registered voters surveyed say China has unfair trade policies, and 65 percent oppose giving China permanent trade access with no annual congressional review. While support for foreign trade policies has increased since 1997, Americans strongly believe trade should be fair and that trade agreements should prevent the loss of U.S. jobs, protect the environment and stop unfair competition by countries that violate workers' rights.

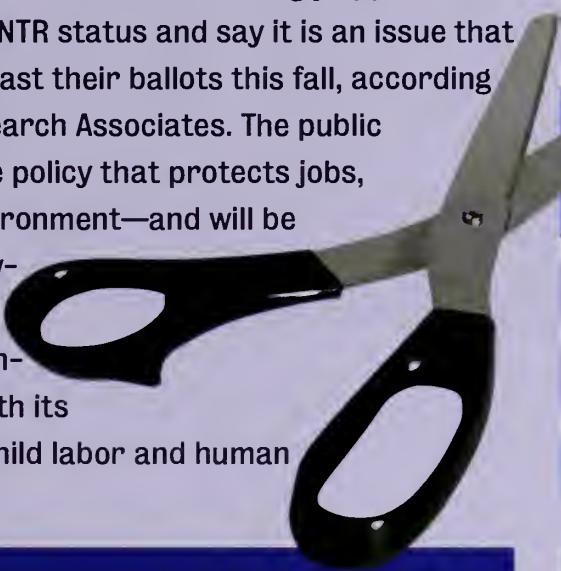
For foreign investment to continue, China must play by the rules—both international labor standards and its own trade commitments.

"When ordinary workers' rights aren't protected, [business] rights aren't protected," says Wei Jingsheng, a Chinese dissident imprisoned for nearly 20 years for speaking out about China's human rights abuses. "There are no legal rights for anyone. Protection is given at the discretion of the Chinese government." Wei is telling western multinationals that current conditions in China endanger their interests as well as those of workers.

By linking trade practices with human and environmental concerns, union activists are carrying out the spirit of Seattle in the efforts to demand a socially just global economy. ☐

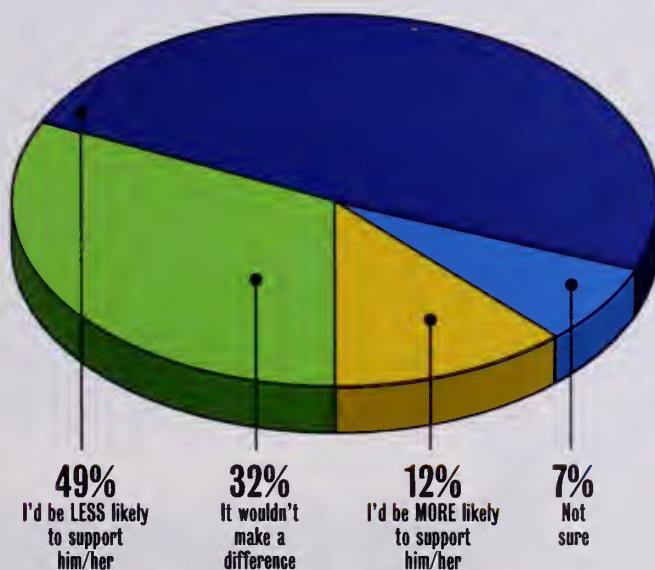
# Public Agrees: No Blank Check for China!

In the coming months, Congress will consider granting China permanent Normal Trade Relations status (formerly Most Favored Nation status) and discarding annual congressional reviews of that country's trade and human rights record. Voters overwhelmingly oppose granting permanent NTR status and say it is an issue that will affect how they cast their ballots this fall, according to Peter D. Hart Research Associates. The public supports a fair trade policy that protects jobs, workers and the environment—and will be less likely to back lawmakers who support NTR status for a country such as China, with its abysmal record on child labor and human and workers' rights.



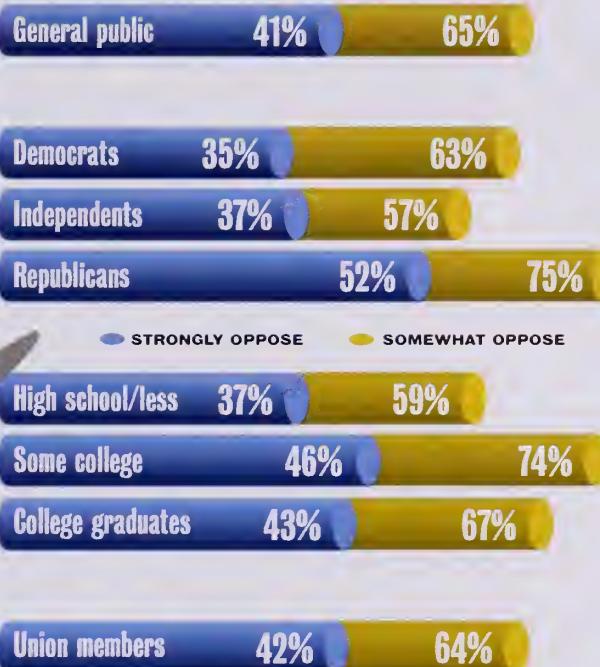
## Pro-China Trade Position Hurts Congressional Candidates

What if your member of Congress voted in favor of permanent free trade with China?



Peter D. Hart Research Associates, January 2000

## Public Opposes Ending China's Annual Review by Congress



Peter D. Hart Research Associates, January 2000

## China: Unfair Trader

Voters are very critical of China's trade behavior, ranking China below average on:

- Allowing overseas access to its market (60 percent).
- Living up to agreements (48 percent).
- Labor conditions (72 percent).
- Human rights (81 percent).

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, January 2000



# Engaged Outraged the Next Rage.\*

By LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

**A**t Indiana University, students are strong supporters of their athletic teams and proudly wear the school logo on their sweatshirts, caps and backpacks. But like a growing number of students across the country, students on the Bloomington campus also share a passion for the people who are sweating for the sake of school spirit: the workers who sew the logo apparel and labor under abysmal conditions for low pay.

IU students came together in 1999 to form the No Sweat! campaign and have convinced the university's administration to take important first steps to fully disclose where college-logo clothing is manufactured and join a strong, independent monitoring program. Student leaders say a key to their progress has been their coalition with local unions. "Because we've done serious organizing on campus and in the community, the university administration is committed to the issue," says Micah Maidenberg, a sophomore active in No Sweat!

All across the nation, students are organizing in support of the rights of workers in sweatshops thousands of miles away. At the same time, students also are joining together on campuses to boost the wages of workers paid at the poverty level by university subcontractors, and are organizing into unions, seeking respect for the work they do as teaching assistants, tutors and research assistants. This new flowering of student activism is infusing the union movement with new vitality and solidifying an important alliance as unions step up their efforts to organize workers and fight the corrosive elements of international trade.

No sweat: Like students across the country, University of Michigan activists are battling to end sweatshop labor.

During her fall 1998 semester abroad in rural Thailand, University of Pennsylvania student Miriam Joffe-Block talked with a woman whose 14-hour days in a textile factory made it difficult for her to breathe. "I saw how globalization benefits elites and erodes the social safety net," she says.

from the Dominican Republic who made college-logo baseball caps for most universities in the United States. For every \$20 cap, they earned just 8 cents. Many workers from the plant had been fired for going to school at night. "When U.S. college students heard their story," Coughlin says, "they had to act."



JIM SESSIONS

# STUDENT ACTIVISM

"This kind of globalization is not good for any workers; it has lowered the overall bar for what is considered responsible business." Returning to campus, Joffe-Block realized that sweatshops manufacturing college-logo materials "represented what was wrong with the global economy and provided an opportunity for something tangible students could do."

The link between the clothes we wear and the workers who produce them offers a clue to the popularity of the college anti-sweatshop movement. "A campus issue that connects to a global issue is ideal for students to get involved in," says Richard Flacks, a sociology professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. The nine-campus UC system recently signed a comprehensive anti-sweatshop code that requires companies licensed to create materials with the school logo to pay a living wage, comply with environmental and health and safety laws and not discriminate against employees because of pregnancy or union organizing. Flacks says classes on global economic issues draw standing-room-only crowds of students.

"College students are outraged to find out that their schools' sweatshirts and T-shirts are sometimes made by young people their own age working long hours for poverty wages," says Ginny Coughlin, who coordinates UNITE's anti-sweatshop program. Two years ago, the union hosted two young workers

At Penn, students mobilized and won the support of their student government and faculty. They ramped up their efforts after linking with United Students Against Sweatshops, a national group founded in 1998 that serves as a coordinator and clearinghouse for anti-sweatshop groups on more than 200 campuses. USAS began when a group of students traveled to Central America with the National Labor Committee to

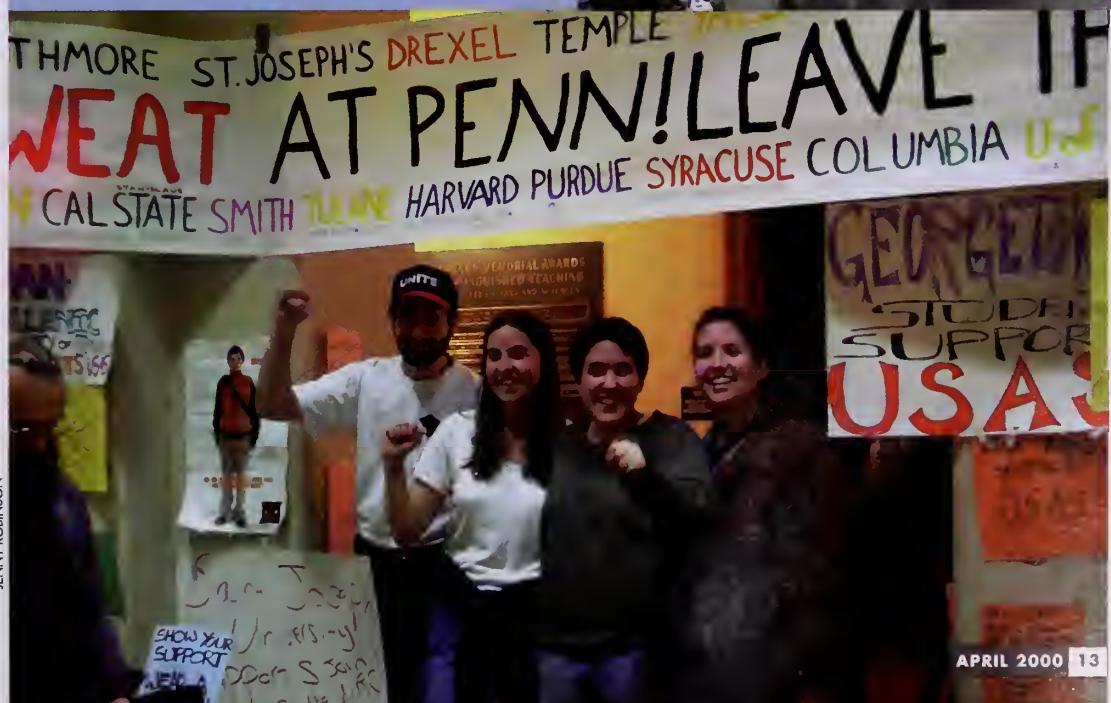
**Engaged:** AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka at a March labor teach-in at the University of Tennessee (top); Oregon State University graduate students seeking a voice at work (center); and anti-sweatshop activism at the University of Pennsylvania.

collect data on sweatshops. It has been nurtured by graduates of the AFL-CIO's Union Summer internship program and has grown over the past two years as students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Georgetown and the University of Wisconsin protested their campuses' use of sweatshops to produce college-logo material.

The anti-sweatshop movement got a big boost in late February when 54 activists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison occupying the chancellor's office were arrested after a four-day sit-in. The students persuaded the administration to leave the



JULIAN KEMP/AFT OREGON



JENNY ROBINSON

corporate-backed Fair Labor Association—which unions and students regard as too weak to adequately monitor sweatshops—and conditionally join the Worker Rights Consortium, a new group committed to strong, independent monitoring. It was an abrupt about-face because only a few weeks prior, the university president turned down the recommendation of the majority of a university task force to join the WRC. At the same time, University of Michigan students staged a sit-in and also were successful in getting the administration to join the WRC.

Geeta Rapal, one of the Wisconsin students arrested, says the prospect of spending a day in jail did not deter her from getting involved. "I was willing to get arrested because sweatshop workers' daily reality is a lack of civil rights," Rapal says, "and getting arrested is pretty small compared to that."

By joining with other student groups, locally and through an active listserv (an e-mail mailing list), the Penn activists built their movement with such attention-grabbing events as a "reverse fashion show" in which students shed some clothes in support of "dis-clothes-ure." Full public disclosure is a key student demand because it allows for independent monitoring. In February, after a two-week sit-in, Penn students convinced the administration to withdraw from the Fair Labor Association. "We were successful in this action because we had students who were willing to sit in and to chant in the lobby," says Joffe-Block. "And unions and community members wrote letters and brought us food." Before the sit-in,

the students had laid the foundation by forming a coalition with community groups and unions—including locals from UNITE, AFSCME, AFT and Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees. They also convinced the Philadelphia City Council to pass a resolution supporting their cause.

Mutual support is also a hallmark of the effort at Indiana University. The No Sweat! campaign has received help with mailings and networking from central labor councils, the state federation and the state's Jobs with Justice chapter, and union leaders say they can count on the students to stand in solidarity with workers in their neighborhood. As unions prepare to protest General Electric's attempt to move jobs from Bloomington to Mexico, they will call on students to distribute leaflets and attend rallies. "It will show we have a coalition, that we are not alone," says Jackie Yenna, president of the White River Central Labor Council, which includes Bloomington.

Nationally, the Steelworkers are trying to forge links with campus activists, mindful of the potential of a student-union alliance. "Coming out of protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, we gained a newfound respect for students and their activism," says Tim Waters, USWA rapid response coordinator. "We support the same things, so it made sense for us to get together."

Concern about the global economy can be the foundation for a long-term coalition, student and union leaders say. "We'll show up at their rallies, and they'll come to ours,"

Waters says. "The youth and energy from students can do a lot for our union."

### Close to home: living-wage campaigns

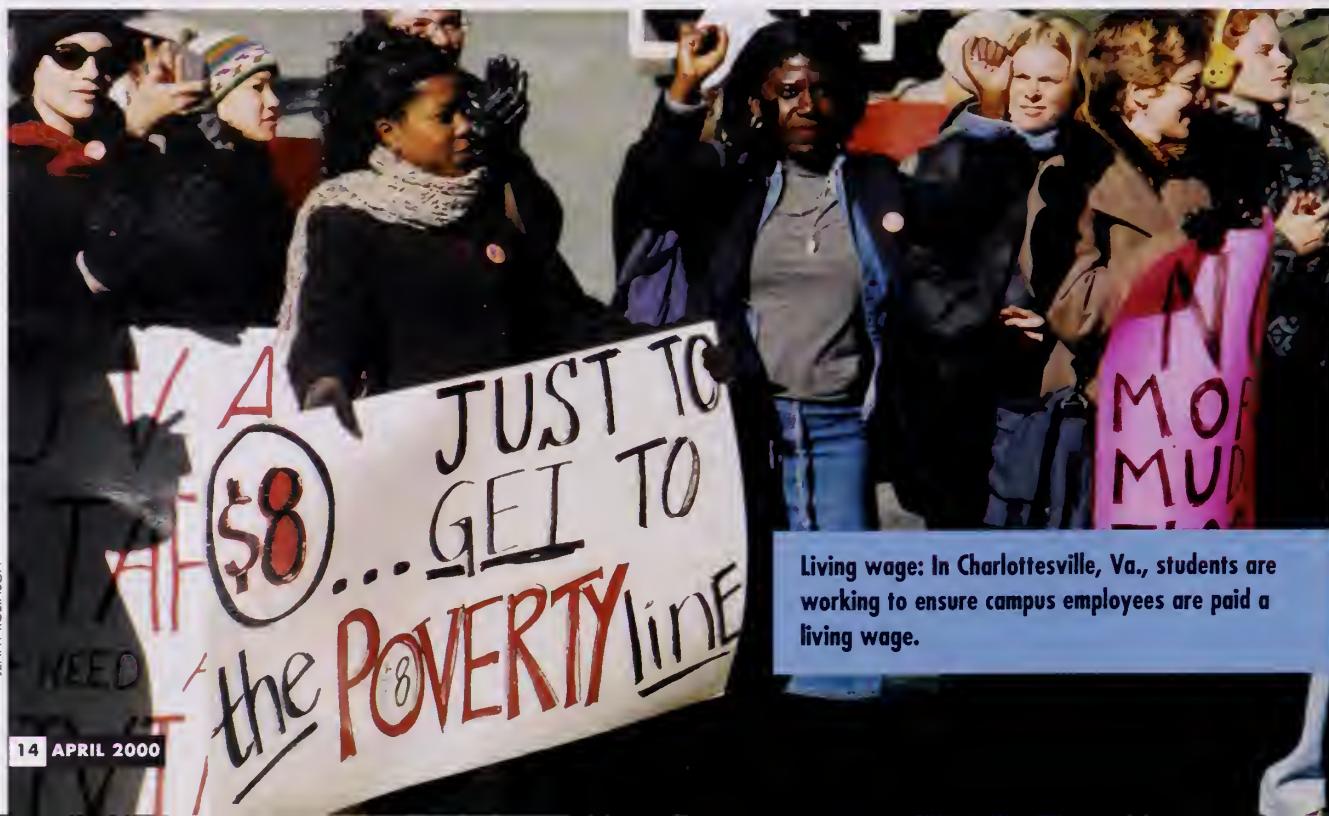
Student concern about living wages for workers abroad extends to workers on their own campuses. A group of faculty, staff and students at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville is fighting for an \$8-an-hour living wage for the employees of university subcontractors. Inspired by a union teach-in three years ago with AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, the Labor Action Group built a coalition with the local NAACP and the Charlottesville Legal Aid Society. In December, the group successfully fought for a cafeteria worker to get her job back after she was disciplined for wearing an "\$8" button. "We forced this university, which was founded by Thomas Jefferson, to apply its free speech rules to its subcontractor," says Nelson Lichtenstein, a history professor active in LAG. Students are attracted to the campaign because "they see the disparity in a time of plenty," says Justin Hill, a graduate student in history. There are similar living-wage efforts at several other campuses, including Johns Hopkins University

in Baltimore and Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.

At the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, students and faculty supported a four-year struggle to ensure job security for food service workers who belong to HERE Local 11. The campaign included a "rolling" hunger strike (in which people take turns fasting for justice) with elected officials, clergy members and such celebrities as Martin Sheen taking part. Last year, the private university agreed to work



DAVID BACON



Living wage: In Charlottesville, Va., students are working to ensure campus employees are paid a living wage.



"Graduate students are prototypical of a new stratum of workers: knowledge workers. But when it comes to wages and benefits, they are left out in the cold," says Sandra Feldman, president of the AFT, which began organizing graduate students in 1969.

In their attempts to thwart organizing drives among graduate employees, many universities argue that these workers are students and not employees. Rutgers University historian Kevin Mattson says that hasn't been true for more than 30 years, ever since graduate students formed the first union at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with AFT in 1967. "The modern university increasingly uses its graduate students like employees—as sources of labor, pure and simple."

Some state laws allow student employees to organize at public universities; others don't. Some states specifically prohibit students from joining a union. Before they could organize at the University of California, academic student employees had to take their case to the Public Employee Relations Board, which ruled they could form a union. When the university still refused to recognize the workers' efforts to join the UAW, they went on strike twice in three years. "Most of my students didn't want me to go on strike, but they understood I was also doing it for them—my working conditions are their learning conditions," says Connie Razza, a teaching assistant in English at UCLA and spokesperson for the Student Association of Graduate Employees/UAW.

Strong support on the campuses and mediation from pro-worker members of Congress and the state legislature led to elections last spring, when an overwhelming majority of the 8,500 academic student employees voted for the union.

"Whether you're installing bumpers or grading papers, everyone who works for a living deserves a voice on the job," says UAW President Stephen Yokich. "And if you're looking for dignity, respect and a fair relationship with your employer, joining a union is the way to go."

Graduate student employees organizing for a voice on the job, anti-sweatshop activists and students involved in living-wage campaigns are forming the foundation of a new generation committed to social and economic justice.

with the union to prevent subcontracting and to continue providing tuition to the school for the children of workers whose jobs are contracted-out. "This drive took a particular issue and tied it to the larger issue of Los Angeles as two cities, one low-wage and immigrant, one affluent," says Scott Polisky, a graduate student in classics who was active in the campaign. "It showed students that unions are part of the fabric of communities and can heal social fractures."

### Campus organizing

Just as students support workers' struggles, workers also are supporting students' efforts to organize. Colleges and universities increasingly are replacing secure, full-time jobs with a patchwork of part-time, temporary, casual jobs. A report by Yale graduate students, who are attempting to organize with HERE, shows the number of teaching assistantships has nearly tripled there in 20 years. Student employees—who teach classes, grade papers and design tests—are turning to unions to help them gain a voice at work and uphold the quality of education, and nearly 30,000 have joined unions.

Within moments of her first day on the job at Oregon State University, science graduate student Mary Schutter says she knew she was an employee. "My adviser told me there were specific tasks I had to do and hours I had to be there," says Schutter, who became president of the Coalition of Graduate Employees/AFT Local 6069 after 750 student workers formed a union in November. "It was clear to me that this is the first job of our careers."

### Action Resources

- ◆ The AFL-CIO website has a step-by-step guide to setting up a sweat-free campus campaign: [www.aflcio.org/sweatfree/10\\_steps.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/sweatfree/10_steps.htm).
- ◆ United Students Against Sweatshops, including Indiana University's No Sweat! education project, 1413 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005; 202-NO-SWEAT; <http://www.umich.edu/~sole/usas>.
- ◆ *Campus Living Wage Manual* from United for a Fair Economy, 2nd Floor, 37 Temple Place, Boston, Mass. 02111; 617-423-2148; [www.stw.org/html/campus\\_living\\_wage\\_manual.html](http://www.stw.org/html/campus_living_wage_manual.html).
- ◆ Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions, with links to individual campus sites, [www.cgeu.org](http://www.cgeu.org).
- ◆ University and College Labor Education Association, [www.aflcio.org/unionand/educate.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/unionand/educate.htm).
- ◆ *Agents of Change: A Handbook for Student Labor Activists* (Order No. MIP43.J99120, 1-9 copies, \$3.25 each; 10-24, \$2.75 each; 25 or more, \$2.25 each) and *High Hopes, Little Trust: A Study of Young Workers and Their Ups and Downs in the New Economy* (No. MIP21PJ99188, 1-9 copies, \$10 each; 10 or more copies, \$4 each). To order, call the AFL-CIO Support Services Department at 1-800-442-5645 or 202-637-5042 in Washington, D.C.
- ◆ Student Labor Action Project, part of the United States Student Association and Jobs with Justice, 501 3rd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001; 202-434-1106. @

**Many student activists get their start through the AFL-CIO's Union Summer internship program. For four weeks, participants are on the front lines of the union movement, organizing and mobilizing in communities across the country. For information on this year's Union Summer, call 800-952-2550 or download an application from [www.aflcio.org/unionsummer](http://www.aflcio.org/unionsummer). @**

"Unions today have a terrific opportunity to tap into the energy, enthusiasm and commitment to social justice that students have," says Coughlin. "These young people are also the future leaders and activists of our movement." @

# Mobilizing for



CHERYL GERBER

**With the White House, the U.S. Senate and House,**

**governorships and state legislatures at stake, the 40 million members of union households around the nation are key to ensuring the election of candidates who support**

**Working family candidate: Workers at Avondale shipyard, who recently won a six-year fight for a voice at work, celebrated their victory in February with Vice President Al Gore in New Orleans.**

# LABOR 2000

BY MIKE HALL

**B**y Election Day 2000, Althea Leach, president of UNITE Local 371 in Rockland, Maine, estimates she and other local union leaders will have talked to all 240 UNITE members in her area at least a half-dozen times about working family issues and the candidates who back them.

Further down the East Coast, New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes estimates that by Nov. 7, all of the state's 2.5 million union members will have been contacted at their worksites, at home through "labor-neighbor" visits, by local union mailings and by phone from volunteer union phone banks. On Feb. 7, union volunteers in New York gave a preview of workers' mobilization strength when they distributed 1 million fliers at 10,000 worksites highlighting Vice President Al Gore's working families record and urging support in the March 7 primary, in which he defeated former Sen. Bill Bradley by 65 percent to 34 percent.

With the White House, the U.S. Senate and House, governorships and state legislatures at stake, the 240 UNITE members in Maine, the 2.5 million New Yorkers and 40 million members of union households around the nation will determine whether a Working Families Agenda that strengthens Social Security and Medicare, provides a Patients' Bill of Rights and rebuilds schools and improves education prevails over a corporate-driven agenda built on Social Security privatization, massive tax cuts for the wealthy and unfair trade practices that benefit only global corporate conglomerates.

Working families can't outspend their opponents from the corporate world—Center for Responsive Politics studies show unions were outspent 11-to-1 in past elections. But the union movement's Labor 2000 aims to ensure that working families win through people-powered politics.

"The heart of Labor 2000," says Danny Thompson, executive secretary-treasurer of the Nevada State AFL-CIO, "is what's worked best here and around the country in past mobilizations: one-on-one, member-to-member contact. We want to mobilize workers to register to vote, to learn about the issues and to get out the vote."

Along with the nationwide efforts to elect Al Gore—"No presidential candidate has ever been more supportive of working families than Al Gore. He stood by us and cares about issues," Hughes says—mobilization efforts will spotlight some 65 key congressional, gubernatorial and state races.

And to counter the influence of the bankers, lawyers and business executives who have dominated politics and held the power of elected office, 2000 in 2000, the federation's initiative to identify and recruit 2,000 union members to run for office in the 2000 election cycle, already has pinpointed more than 1,970 union members running for office or already holding office.

**One-on-one: Blueprint for success**  
In the 1996 and 1998 elections, union leaders found the best tools to mobilize workers and win votes for working-family candidates are workplace fliers distributed

## LABOR 2000 ON THE WEB

GET THE ELECTION information you need on the AFL-CIO Labor 2000 website: [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/news.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/news.htm), which includes a Working Families Issues survey so you can tell politicians about what issues are important to you. The site also enables you to see where candidates stand, register to vote, find out how to become a delegate to your party's convention—and learn how to volunteer to become part of Labor 2000. @

agenda

by other union members. In 1998, 76 percent of union members contacted at work voted for the working-families-backed candidate, according to Lake Snell Perry & Associates Inc. But only 11 percent of union members received fliers at work.

The 1998 race in Kansas' 3rd Congressional District serves as a blueprint for success. The district had not elected a union-backed candidate since 1958, and the incumbent had just a 6 percent voting record on working family issues.

Even with the endorsement of the district's unions, challenger Dennis Moore faced an uphill battle. In April, Moore's support among union households was pegged at only 46 percent—and at just 39 percent in nonunion households. By two weeks before the election, Moore had gained only 2 percentage points. Working with the Tri-County Labor Council of Eastern Kansas and the Lawrence Central Labor Council, local unions staged a massive mobilization effort aimed at the district's 12,000 registered union members. Each local union distributed thousands of copies of three different worksite fliers and the labor councils boosted their phone bank efforts. The weekend before the election, union volunteers walked every precinct in the district to urge union families to get to the polls.

On Election Day, Moore won by almost 10,000 votes. "If we can do this in Kansas, we can do it anywhere," says Tri-County Labor Council President James Hadel.

More recently, unions' efforts in the New Hampshire primary reaffirmed the effectiveness of a one-on-one strategy: Gore was able to come from behind to win 53 percent to 47 percent over Bradley. Union members' huge mobilization effort was the key to Gore's turnaround, says state AFL-CIO President Mark MacKenzie. Union volunteers made more than 5,000 union house visits in Manchester, Nashua, Salem and Concord, and they hand-delivered videos reviewing Gore's longtime support of working families. Members of more than 20 unions leafleted at dozens of plant gates and called thousands of union members.

Voters from union households made up 24 percent of the Democratic household voter turnout, some 5 percent of eligible New Hampshire voters, and cast their ballots 62 percent to 37 percent for Gore,



Turning up the heat: Fire Fighters mobilized members for the New Hampshire primaries.

exit polls showed. "When you talk to our members about the issues, it clearly makes a difference. I think the union vote was responsible for the win," MacKenzie says.

### Building to win, building to last

To achieve the same results in the November elections as in the New Hampshire primary, international unions are designating Labor 2000 political coordinators to mobilize union workers. In Michigan, for instance, some 22 unions recruited volunteer coordinators by February. They in turn recruited political volunteers in each local union who will be key to mobilizing and educating workers at each worksite.

Labor 2000's immediate goal is to put working family candidates into office to ensure that when it comes time to make deci-

sions on such important issues as Social Security and Medicare, health care, education and taxes, lawmakers make the right choices.

But just as important is the initiative's other goal, building a lasting base—an experienced core of union activists and families who will be there election after election, who can mobilize for community and state campaigns and working family issues and who can recruit and train new activists.

"We've got to get a structure built within our local so we don't have to re-create this every election and so we can have something in place when we need to mobilize quickly around a particular issue," says Leach.

In Nevada, Thompson says the political mobilization structure established in 1998 made it possible to rapidly mobilize for this year's elections. In November 1999, unions began building to win this fall when some 60 local union coordinators in the Las Vegas area and another 50 in Reno and northern Nevada began training union members in voter registration and other one-on-one actions.

"We didn't have to start from scratch," Thompson explains. "In 1998, we did build to last, but we also built some respect politically. People remember what we did and we showed elected officials when they vote for things that help working families, working families will turn out and help them." ☐

## 2000 in 2000: Steelworker Mike Dunlap

THIS FALL, STEELWORKERS MEMBER MIKE DUNLAP hopes he has the same success in his race for the 12th District seat in the West Virginia House of Delegates as he did in Labor '98 as a volunteer, when his efforts helped elect a union-backed working families candidate to Congress for the first time in 32 years in Kentucky's 4th District. As a congressional district coordinator in the 1998 elections, Dunlap implemented the lessons he learned as a USWA political intern in Washington, D.C., and at the AFL-CIO National Labor Political Training Center to help mobilize union families.



STEELWORKERS

Dunlap, a member of USWA Local 5668 at Century Aluminum in Ravenswood, W.Va., says that in Congress and in the state legislature, "I've seen firsthand what a difference one vote can make. But no matter what we do in politics—letter writing, rallies, phone calls—at the end of the day, we still can't cast that vote. I decided that I wanted to cast that vote for working families." ☐

# Working Women 2000



RONALD GOULD

More than 5,000 women from across the country gathered in Chicago to network, share political mobilization and organizing strategies and join together around common struggles

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

**"People need to be motivated, and this conference helps us with that."**

Maureen Welch,  
Steelworkers Local  
6787, Chesterton,  
Ind.



RONALD GOULD

## Kym Hampton, a professional basketball player

with the New York Liberty (above), has a lot in common with the secretaries, bricklayers, machine operators, nurses and others who took part in the AFL-CIO Working Women Conference 2000—like them, she is outraged about the lack of equal pay for women. Speaking before the 5,000 women gathered in Chicago March 11–12, Hampton said female basketball players are paid \$25,000 a year, while men get \$250,000.

"Who stole the zero?" she asked, to thunderous applause from thousands of women who clapped and shook boxes of macaroni and cheese—symbols of the low-cost meals women cook for their families to make ends meet.

Unequal pay affects all working women, whether on the basketball court, on the shop floor or in the office cubicle. It is an issue that tops the agenda of working

women nationwide, according to a survey released in March by the AFL-CIO's Working Women's Department. An astounding 87 percent of working women polled said equal pay is an important legislative issue, and they cited health care, paid family leave and pensions as other key concerns. The telephone survey documented that working women—married and single, of all income levels—

**WORKING**  
AFL-CIO   
**WOMEN SAY...**

# "I take care of people."

"All of us living of our seniors would be in nursing homes. When we go to the grocery store, the cashier does not charge a small amount just because we don't make much money. We are going to the state capital, and we are going to talk to the politicians."

are juggling family and work responsibilities while not receiving the pay and benefits they need to make ends meet.

To enable working women to make those issues part of their action agenda, the Working Women Conference 2000 gave union and nonunion women the knowledge and the strategies they need to go back to their unions and communities. Conference participants combined serious looks at such issues as globalization and union organizing with rousing breaks in which they listened to the *a capella* harmonies of Sisterfriends, an Ohio-based sextet of African American women; laughed with the X-Cheerleaders, a performance art troupe of former cheerleaders; and pasted (temporary) Working Women tattoos on their arms.

Participants heard from more than one dozen working women who spoke at the conference, as well as from such speakers as Vice President Al Gore, Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Reps. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.). They took part in more than 60 issues-based workshops, sharing strategies for achieving their goals through political action, organizing and building coalitions.



MICHAEL CANDEE

Lula Bronson,  
home care worker  
and SEIU Local 880  
member, Chicago



RONALD COULD

"If we can tell our members what we heard here, they'll get more involved in our union," said Kristi Hyde, a member of AFT Local 4000 in Illinois.

## Mobilizing for the 2000 elections

Proving that it is never too early to begin a career in political activism, NiQuay Harper, honored in 1999 by Virginia Gov. James Gilmore (R) for her outstanding efforts in registering people to vote, announced at the conference her plans to become president—in 2040.

"Today I celebrate my ninth birthday and my ninth year of girl

power," she said to a cheering crowd. "I help register voters so I can have a voice."

Registering working families is the first step for unions as they mobilize members to become part of Labor 2000, a nationwide effort that includes educating members on the issues and supporting union members who run for public office. "If we're going to build a better life for ourselves and our families, we need to elect officials who are pro-working women, pro-working family, pro-us," said Linda Chavez-Thompson, AFL-CIO executive vice president.

Participants left the conference with a Working Women Action Kit that outlines the AFL-CIO Working Women Vote program and provides step-by-step information on running registration drives, planning rallies, setting up phone banks and organizing precinct walking. Many attendees didn't wait to get back home before mobilizing for political action—after the conference concluded, they made get-out-the-vote calls in Chicago before the March 21 Illinois primary.

## Organizing for strength

Women in unions have better pay and benefits to help balance work and family life, earning 35 percent more than nonunion women, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Yet, too many employers go to great lengths to thwart workers' attempts to form unions. Speaking at the conference, Rhonda Aron described how she was fired when she

**Unity:** Gloria Johnson, president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (left) and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (p. 21) join thousands of working women in Chicago (below).

## Action Resources

- To join the AFL-CIO Voice@Work Women's Network, call 202-637-5064. Working women also can take part in *7 Days in June* (June 10–17), the AFL-CIO's weeklong series of events spotlighting employers' war on workers, by calling 800-848-3021 or visiting [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork).

- For copies of "Working Women Say... Findings from the Ask a Working Woman 2000 Survey," call 800-442-5645; in Washington, D.C.: 202-637-5042; or visit the website for the executive summary at [www.aflcio.org/women/surveyl.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/women/surveyl.htm). ☐



# “Seventeen years ago,

I began working for minimum wage.

Even today I cannot make ends meet, so I work overtime and have no time to spend with my daughter and son. When they were little, they missed me so much they would cling to my legs when I cooked dinner.”

tried to organize a union with the Food and Commercial Workers at the Cable Keystone poultry plant in Albany, Ky., which Aron said receives millions of dollars in state and federal tax breaks. “We want a workplace where we have the right to use the bathroom, a workplace freed of sexual harassment,” Aron said. “We want a voice at the workplace and we won’t back down.”

Gore was greeted with cheers when he said safeguarding workers’ freedom to choose a voice on the job is one of his top concerns, and he plans to make it a key priority of his presidency. “I don’t care what your politics or ideology are,” Gore said. “We have to have a fair approach to organizing.”

attendants at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport to support their efforts to organize. Delta’s 20,000 flight attendants—the only flight attendants working for a major airline without a union—say the company arbitrarily changes work rules.

“There basically are no rules,” said Amy Gale, a Delta flight attendant. “With a union,” she said, “we could get the rules in writing and they’d be binding.”

The company’s efforts to block workers from gaining a voice on the job with the Association of Flight Attendants have included bumping passengers off flights so flight attendants could be flown to mandatory anti-union meetings, according to the AFA.

At the rally, Gale saw the solidarity workers have when unions are behind them. “I can’t believe this many people are here for us,” she said. “It will really make Delta wake up and hear our voices.”

Standing behind Gale and her coworkers are the 5,000 working women at the Working Women Conference 2000—and

**Myung Ja Koo,**  
*electronics assembler*  
**San Jose, Calif.**  
*(translated)*



MICHAEL CANDEE

all those they will reach out to in the coming months.

“We are organizing and getting our members involved,” said Debbie Jones, president of Machinists Lodge 1933 in Pocatello, Idaho, where the central labor council mobilized union members to run a successful recall drive against two school board members who were threatening union jobs. The efforts of Jones and other union members renewed the unions’ commitment to organizing. “We will keep striving to educate and recruit new and old members. I feel we need to have solidarity and then we can organize the world.” ☐



While 6 million working women already are union members, millions more like Aron would join if they could. In a March 1999 Peter D. Hart Research Associates survey, 57 percent of young working women said they want a union. Women and people of color are especially disadvantaged, because they often have the least power on the job and the most to gain by joining unions.

Conference participants heard about union members getting involved in the AFL-CIO Voice@Work campaign, which engages unions and their allies in spotlighting egregious employer actions that thwart workers’ freedom to choose a voice at work. Taking part in rallies, letter writing and political action to combat fierce employer hostility toward workers forming unions, union members around the country have pledged to take three or four small actions a year to support organizing.

Putting the Voice@Work plan into action, about 100 union activists ended the conference by rallying with Delta Air Lines flight

## Global Sisterhood

Participants at the Working Women Conference 2000 discussed the link between their rights as working women in the United States and the rights of their sisters around the globe. If corporations are allowed to abuse workers in developing nations with poverty wages and abysmal working conditions, they have more leverage to take the low road at U.S. plants, explained Molly McGrath during the conference’s Women in the World Economy workshop. McGrath is a leader of the student anti-sweatshop movement at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“We raised consciousness in our campus community, showing that instances where people are forced to work in sweatshops in Indonesia create instances where people are pressured to work without benefits in the United States,” said McGrath, who was among 54 people recently arrested during a successful sit-in at the university president’s office. McGrath and other students convinced the administration to join strong monitoring organizations to ensure materials with the university’s logo are not made in sweatshops.

“We need to organize in every country for a fair wage, so wherever corporations go they will find people who have rights,” said Yolanda McCrea, a member of Mail Handlers Local 300, a Laborers affiliate, in Jersey City, N.J.

As Gloria Johnson, president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and AFL-CIO Executive Council member, said, “We have a sisterhood with every working woman around the world.”

Together with affiliate unions, the AFL-CIO has launched a Campaign for Global Fairness to ensure international trade and investment rules protect workers’ rights and the environment. To find out how to get involved, see “Waging a Campaign for Global Fairness,” p. 8, and visit [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy). ☐

These Seats  
Are Taken

Imagine showing up at the airport on time only to get bumped at the last minute—not because the plane is overbooked, but because the airline wants to shuttle flight attendants to mandatory anti-union meetings.

Last November, Flight Attendants say passengers on Delta Air Lines flights to Cincinnati, Atlanta, Salt Lake City and Dallas/Fort Worth were bumped as Delta shipped flight attendants to its hub cities for mass meetings.

Although Delta stopped bumping passengers, it continued holding mandatory meetings through March—which shows how far the airline will go to try to deny its 20,000 flight attendants a decent wage and fair treatment, says Nancy Lenk, who is heading AFA's Delta campaign. But Lenk says the meetings did not dampen the enthusiasm of the flight attendants who are seeking a voice



**Bumpy ride: AFA Delta flight attendant activists say the airline bumped passengers to shuttle flight attendants to anti-union meetings.**

at work with the AFA.

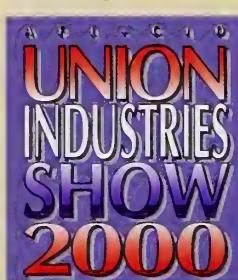
Neither did another company ploy. In December, Delta sent each flight attendant a video produced by a union-busting firm featuring the company's new senior vice president of in-flight services. The vice president explains that she is there to protect and serve the flight attendants. In response, the attendants continue to organize and build union solidarity, Lenk adds. Their solidarity soon will be on display as the flight attendants plan to begin informational leafleting in airports around the country this year. ☐

## Union-Industries Show 2000

**T**ens of thousands of working families in the Milwaukee area will get an opportunity to teach their children about work, skills and unions at the 2000 AFL-CIO Union-Industries Show May 5-8 in the Midwest Express Center.

Each year the show, sponsored by the AFL-CIO Union Label and Service Trades Department, provides times for school children to visit on class field trips so that they can see skilled workers explaining how products are made and receive free pencils, key chains, ice cream and other items.

This marks the fourth visit of the Union-Industries Show to Milwaukee since 1948. This year's show will cover an area equal to nearly four football fields inside the Midwest Express Center, the city's new exhibition hall, which is 100 percent union built and operated. ☐



## Breaking the Chains

**A**t Burlington Memorial Hospital in Burlington, Wis., 150 members of the Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals/AFT unchained themselves from mandatory overtime and short staffing after a campaign that included handbilling outside stores, their ankles shackled in ball and chain.

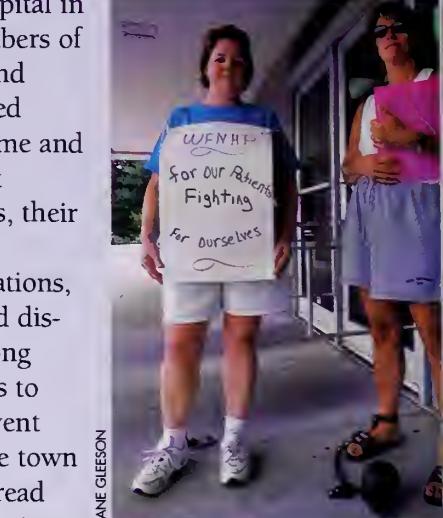
Last fall, prior to contract negotiations, the nurses held demonstrations and distributed yard signs, picking up strong community support for their efforts to improve quality care. When they went door to door asking residents in the town of 6,000 to display yard signs that read "Mandatory Overtime" inside the universal "no" symbol, other neighbors "came up to them asking for signs," says Candice Owley, president of the Wisconsin FNHP/AFT.

As a result of the campaign, the nurses won contract language that sets out a procedure for management to follow before requiring nurses to work mandatory overtime. If the hospital fails to follow the procedure, nurses can't be disciplined for refusing to work overtime, Owley notes. ☐

## BOMBS AWAY

**A**bomb threat would clear most buildings. But not in Mount Holly, N.J., where sheriff's deputies declared a bomb threat a hoax and said no one needed to leave the seven-story Burlington County Courthouse—even as they combed the premises looking for an explosive.

Fearful of staying in the building, clerical worker Brenda Hicks says she called her union, Communications Workers Local 1034, and was told she could leave because the employer is required to provide a safe workplace. Hicks informed her supervisor she was leaving; other workers stayed because they feared retribution. Six days later, Hicks was facing disciplinary action that could jeopardize her job, according to a county management specialist quoted in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.



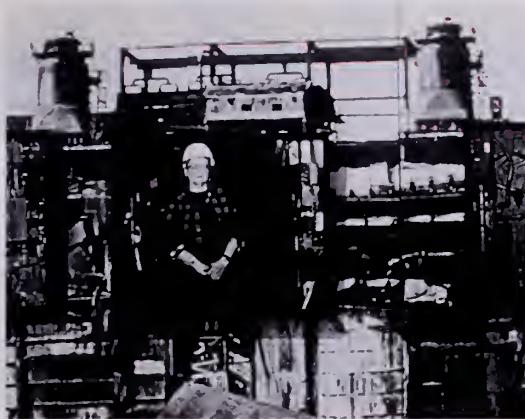
**Chain gang: FNHP/AFT nurses in Burlington, Wis., won contract language that unshackles them from mandatory overtime.**

"What the h—l is a safe and healthful working condition if they are searching for a bomb?" asks John Lazzarotti, president of Local 1034's Burlington County branch. "The issue here is that they're the boss and the union isn't going to tell the workers when they can leave the building." The county also is fighting a grievance for not giving Hicks holiday pay for Election Day, the day before the bomb threat.

Currently, a county hearing officer is deliberating the case, Lazzarotti says, noting the county asked for at least a 30-day suspension for Hicks—and an apology from the union. ☐



**Explosive issue: Brenda Hicks is fighting a disciplinary action for seeking safety during a bomb threat.**



## EXHIBIT

"Steeltown," a series of photo collages by James Williams, focuses on the lives of steelworkers and reveals Williams' concern for social forces that buffet industry, unions and the working class. Drawn on his experience of working 14 years at Dofasco, one of the largest steel plants in Hamilton, Ontario, Williams says his work provides "a positive reinforcement for working-class people in a society that treats heavy industry and hard labor as an embarrassment." His photos have been exhibited in Canada, Mexico, Germany and the United States, and are now on display through June 9 at the George Meany Memorial Archives, 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, Md. 20903. For directions, call 301-431-5451 or visit: [www.georgemeany.org](http://www.georgemeany.org). ☐

## PUBLICATIONS

*If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote, They Would Have Given Us Candidates*, by Jim Hightower, takes a humorous look at the 2000 elections and finds the winners already have been decided: the handful of financial and corporate elites who bankroll candidates. Hightower suggests that the working majority can and should fight to change American politics. \$25. HarperCollins, 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022; phone 800-242-7737.



IF THE GODS  
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US TO VOTE  
THEY WOULD  
HAVE GIVEN  
US CANDIDATES

MORE POLITICAL SUBVERSION FROM  
JIM HIGHTOWER

*Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*, by Doreen Cronin, with pictures by Betsy Lewin, offers children ages 3 to 7 the basics of organizing, empowerment and solidarity. Cows join together to type a message asking Farmer Brown for electric blankets because the barn is cold. When he refuses, the cows go on strike. The strike soon includes the chickens. A compromise is reached with the help of an impartial party—the duck. But the benefits of collective action continue. \$15. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020; phone: 800-223-2336; website: [www.simonandschuster.com/kids/](http://www.simonandschuster.com/kids/). ☐



and Its Economics; Stanley Aronowitz, *From the Ashes of the Old: American Labor and America's Future*; Arthur Shostak, *CyberUnion: Empowering Labor Through Computer Technology*; and David Wellman, *The Union Makes Us Strong*. For more information, contact Ross Rieder, president of the PNLHA at 206-524-0346, or e-mail [PNLHA1@aol.com](mailto:PNLHA1@aol.com). E-mail registration is available, or check out the association's website at [www.members.home.net/pnlha](http://www.members.home.net/pnlha). ☐

## WEBSITING

*Social Justice E-Zine*, produced by Ray and Kim Goforth, is a free Internet newsletter (zine) that discusses the struggles of those who work for gender equality, democratic government, economic opportunity, intellectual freedom, environmental protection and human rights. Ray Goforth is a field staff representative for Professional and Technical Engineers Local 17 in Seattle, and Kim Goforth works as an advocate for women and children. The newsletter, published every five weeks, is at: [www.members.tripod.com/~goforth/socialjustice.html](http://www.members.tripod.com/~goforth/socialjustice.html). ☐

## GUIDE

*Health Care Choices: Sharing the Quality Message with Union Members*, a guidebook from the Foundation for Accountability (FACCT), describes how union negotiators, health and welfare fund trustees and administrators can base their health care choices on the quality of health care union members receive. FACCT has developed approaches for interviewing patients, measuring performance and presenting comparisons of health care plans. For more information or to receive a free copy of the guide, contact FACCT: by phone, 503-223-2228; fax, 503-223-4336; or e-mail, [info@facc.org](mailto:info@facc.org). ☐

## CONFERENCE

*From Artisanship to Information Age: Lessons for Labor's Struggle* is the topic for the 32nd annual Pacific Northwest Labor History Conference May 19-21 in Tacoma, Wash. Four authors will present their views on the effects of technology on workers and their organizations. Actor Ian Ruskin will portray Harry Bridges, the late leader of the Longshore and Warehouse Union, using Bridges' words on life and waterfront mechanization. The presenters are Douglas Dowd, author of *Triumph or Calamity: A Critical History of Capitalism*

*100 Years of Struggle and Success*, a photographic chronicle of America's unions in the 20th century, is available for a limited time. This 48-page issue of [America@work](mailto:America@work)

includes highlights of workers and their unions as they struggled to build a nation in which children go to school, rather than work, where an eight-hour day makes it possible for workers to spend time with their families and all Americans are bolstered by Social Security, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation and safety on the job. This special issue is available for \$2.50 per copy; \$2/copy for 50-99 issues; and \$1/copy for 100 or more issues. To order, call toll-free: 1-800-442-5645 or 202-637-5044. ☐



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Impoverished Children, Working Parents • Getting Respected, Getting Elected

Special Pullout  
on Immigration,  
Page 13

**"CONDITIONS IN CHINA AFFECT US.** Given [the government's] control of factories, labor, etc., they can make products more cheaply than we can or any Asian economy can. This endangers our free trade, free labor, free industry....China must develop...standards and procedures before they are given WTO membership. We must verify that they will really be Normal Trade Relations partners. They won't change afterwards! Verify first!"—Michael McCarthy, SEIU Local 616, San Lorenzo, Calif.

**"I WORK WITH MENTALLY ILL CLIENTS**

in a community setting. As an educated woman in a traditionally female occupation, I find that I am earning little above what I had formerly earned as a laborer with no education beyond high school. My father and my brother, as local sand- and gravel-hauling truck drivers, both earn more than I do, and generally only work nine or 10 months out of the year.

"Working women need unions, but more education needs to be done to make women aware of this. And the unions need more education on how to reach working women where they live, in homes with jelly on the floor, as well as work-places with low ceilings."—Peggy Van Sickle, RN, AFSCME Local 2733, Brighton, Mich.



## Say What?

**What training programs does your union offer to increase skills and boost membership?**

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue.

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### Here's What You Say ABOUT WHAT YOUR UNION IS DOING TO REACH OUT TO YOUNG ACTIVISTS:

"SEIU is recruiting young activists to become future organizers by visiting college campuses and other locations where young people can be found. SEIU is also an active partner in the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute, providing staff for the OI's three-day training and screening programs.

"The solidarity shown by student activists on college campuses and in secondary schools has made a significant difference in our organizing efforts, contract negotiations and battles for a living wage. Recently, the support demonstrated by students at Wesleyan University in Connecticut was both helpful and inspirational."—Kevin Brown, secretary-treasurer/organizing director, SEIU Local 531, Hartford, Conn.

**"I WANT TO THANK THE AFL-CIO**

for continuing to support issues that are important to working families. Your article in the February issue ["How Can I Take Care of My Family...and Do My Job?"] was of particular interest to me. I represent the labor council on the Joining Forces Kent County Child Care team and I am a member of the Workforce Development Board Child Care Committee....Business still looks at child care as a personal issue, even though everyone else in the community understands it as a community issue. I will be so proud to take this article to all of them to show them what the labor movement is doing for families and children....I have also shared the information you provided on the "Exclusive Club Called Congress" [Toolbox, February 2000] with many of my friends, relatives and co-workers, union and nonunion. It really is a great, simple piece that says a whole lot."—Debbie Knoohuisen, Communications Workers Local 4034, AFL-CIO community services liaison, Grand Rapids, Mich.

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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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## Janitors Mobilize for Justice Nationwide



AP/DAMIAN DOVARGANE

**Si se puede:** Janitors in Los Angeles won a new contract in April.

As thousands of Los Angeles janitors celebrated the end of their unfair labor practice strike, more than 100,000 janitors across the country joined in a coordinated mobilization for full-time jobs with living wages and affordable health care.

After blocking the streets of Los Angeles during days of protest, more than 8,000 members of SEIU Local 1877 voted overwhelmingly April 24 for a new three-year agreement that provides wage increases of \$1.90 per hour—or 26 percent—for janitors who work downtown and \$1.50 per hour (or 22 percent) for janitors in the suburbs. Both suburban and downtown janitors also won a \$500 one-time bonus.

Union leaders announced they would build on the win in

Los Angeles and earlier ones in downtown Chicago and New York City by shifting resources and energy to help janitors who remained on strike in the Chicago suburbs and San Diego.

"The commercial real estate industry and cleaning contractors have been consolidating their power for years, so we knew we had to consolidate our strength as well to fight them back," says Stephen Lerner, SEIU Building Services Division director. "Building service contractors in L.A. are the same contractors members bargain with across the country."

As cleaning contractors increasingly merged to create national companies, SEIU responded in 1995 by negotiating cleaning contracts in major cities that would all expire within months of each other, enabling the union to mobilize workers coast to coast when bargaining talks began.

Over the past 20 years, real wages for janitors in many cities have remained unchanged or decreased—while commercial building rental rates have increased by 18 percent.

Over the past three years, SEIU janitors and their local unions have developed a strong organization through organizing education and training. In Los Angeles, after identifying leaders from the ranks, Local 1877 held weekend classes where union members learned about the industry and the commercial real estate market and compared union wages and strategies in other cities. ☐

## Workers Speak Out for Ergonomics Standard

Nine years ago, Laura Miner was at her desk, typing as usual on her computer keyboard. "Suddenly, without warning, I experienced such tremendous pain and weakness that I could no longer use my arm...and it has never been the same since," Miner told an Occupational Safety and Health Administration hearing panel in Washington, D.C., March 24.

The public hearing was the first of four held across the country on the federal ergonomics rule OSHA proposed last November. Once the hearings end, OSHA will determine whether to issue a final rule.

Miner, a volunteer with the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, was a vice president of J.P. Morgan at the time of her injury. Today, she suffers from multiple work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

Maria Olivas, a UAW Local 2110 member in New York City, joined Miner and more than 100 union members from 16 unions who testified during OSHA hearings in Washington, D.C., Chicago and Portland, Ore. "There is no place more fraught with MSD risk factors than today's automated office," said Olivas, who has endured pain from MSDs since 1997.

OSHA estimates that almost 2 million workers suffer MSD injuries annually, and union health and safety activists who have waged a 10-year campaign for an ergonomics rule say the standard is long overdue. The AFL-CIO, together with its affiliates, is urging OSHA to adopt a strong final rule that requires employers to address potential hazards more quickly and provide better workplace training. ☐

## Honoring Workers Memorial Day

On April 28, Workers Memorial Day, workers, activists and people of faith gathered in more than 100 events around the nation to honor the dead and fight for the living by organizing and mobilizing for safe jobs. In Portland, Ore., members of AFSCME, AFT, Carpenters, Communications Workers, Food and Commercial Workers, Letter Carriers, Machinists, Teamsters and SEIU joined local clergy members and community activists in a downtown "Parade of Prayers" to honor workers killed or injured on the job. OSHA figures show

that more than 6,000 workers each year are killed on the job and another 50,000 die from work-related diseases.

The need for a federal ergonomics rule is the focus of many actions. As AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson told hundreds gathered during a Workers Memorial Day rally in Atlanta: "For 10 long years, some of the most anti-worker, anti-union corporations in America have been using every trick they know to destroy the whole idea of an ergonomic standard for working people." ☐



of heart: Union and community members in Seattle created a mural that reflects a neighborhood's diverse culture.

## LABOR MURAL: A Community Portrait

Through bold colors and dramatic representations, a new, 100-foot-wide mural in Seattle's Judkins Park community reflects the connection between diverse cultures and workers' common aspirations. The mural was created through the joint efforts of union members and neighborhood residents who shared their vision, time and skills.

Dedicated in March at a gathering attended by more than 100 neighborhood residents, the four-panel mural depicts real-life community activists and illustrates the common bonds all workers share in their struggle for economic and social justice, says King County Labor Council Executive Secretary-Treasurer Ron Judd. Creating the artwork gave local unions the opportunity to "reach out and deepen our relationship with the community," says Judd, who will become AFL-CIO Western Region director June 1.

Local union and community volunteers began last summer to design the mural, which adorns a Seattle Community College building, and young participants in the city's Central Area Motivation Program interviewed many of the community activists portrayed in the mural.

Unions "cannot have the kind of progressive social movement we want without being involved in communities," says Judd. @

## EQUAL PAY DAY

Union activists around the country marked Equal Pay Day May 11 with a series of actions to shine a spotlight on the persistent wage gap between men and women. Because women on average earn 74 percent of what men do, the day symbolizes how far into the new year the average woman must work to catch up with what the average man earned the year before.

In Boston, union leaders, working women and elected

officials came together to discuss women's role in the work place with Irasema Garza, head of the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau.

Meanwhile in Ohio, state federation leaders kicked off their campaign for a November ballot initiative after seeing no movement on an equal pay bill in the state legislature. "Pay equity is an issue of practical value for working families," says Bill Burga, president of the Ohio AFL-CIO.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Making the Global Economy Work for Working Families

From the steps of the U.S. Capitol to the halls of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, more than 15,000 union members from around the country delivered a loud and clear message to Congress April 12: "No Blank Check for China."

In the largest one-day union rally and lobby effort, union members and leaders urged Congress to reject passage of permanent Normal Trade Relations for China and to maintain Congress' annual review of that nation's workers' and human rights record when the issue comes up for a vote later this month.

The effort was part of a weeklong series of mobilizations in Washington, D.C., to make the global economy work for working families. The events united a coalition of trade unionists, human and workers' rights activists, students, environmentalists and people of faith in the fight against global corporate greed.

At the No Blank Check for China rally, Dave Lucas, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 671 in Hartford, Conn., said U.S. union members must "stand up for what's right."

"Things we take for granted—the right to organize, not to go to jail for speaking your mind—Chinese workers don't have that."

Wei Jingsheng, who spent 18 years in prison for speaking out about China's workers, told the cheering unionists that if China's workers were allowed free speech, they, too, would speak out against permanent NTR and China's entry into the World Trade Organization.

On April 16, more than 30,000 people protested the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—whose delegates were meeting in Washington, D.C.—at the Mobilization for Global Justice march and rally. The week's action began April 9, when union members joined in a Jubilee 2000 rally that called for relief from the staggering debt afflicting developing nations. @

Equal pay tops this year's AFL-CIO Ask a Working Woman survey responses as the most important legislative issue for working women, as it



MICHELLE FRANKFURTER



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

Global fairness: Some 15,000 union members say "no" to permanent Normal Trade Relations with China April 12 (above), and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka speaks to participants in a 30,000-strong April 16 rally on IMF reform.

did in a 1997 survey. To see how much unequal pay costs your working family, check out [www.aflcio.org/women/calculat.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/women/calculat.htm). @



Organizing: New York University students are seeking to join the UAW.

GSOC/UAW

## Students Seek to Organize at Private University

**L**ike their counterparts at public universities, the graduate student employees at New York University, a private college, grade tests, teach classes and hold office hours. But unlike their public peers, their right to form a union has not been recognized—until now. On April 3, a regional National Labor Relations Board ruling said graduate teaching assistants at NYU, who have been trying to form a union with UAW, are indeed employees and have the right to come together for a stronger voice on the job.

"This historic ruling provides graduate teaching assistants with a fundamen-

FILE PHOTO

**Voice@Work:** UAW President Stephen Yokich applauds a ruling backing NYU students' efforts to organize.

## Union Members Online

Union members are going online in a big way, with 74 percent of all members who own a computer subscribing to an online service—an increase of 18 percent from a year ago, according to a survey for the AFL-CIO by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. The recently launched workingfamilies.com, a new partnership between the AFL-CIO and union affiliates, will enable even more union members to get online, through discounted Internet service and low-cost computers (see back page).

Women and union members with a high school education or less showed the largest increase in online subscriptions: Eighty-four percent of the women in the survey and 81 percent of workers with a high school education who have a computer said they subscribe to a service. Union members with some college (83 percent of those surveyed) and those younger than 40 (84 percent) are most likely to subscribe to an online service.

While the number of online subscriptions increased, the market share among union members subscribing to the largest Internet service, America Online, dropped from 51 percent to 37 percent, as smaller providers have become more popular. ☐

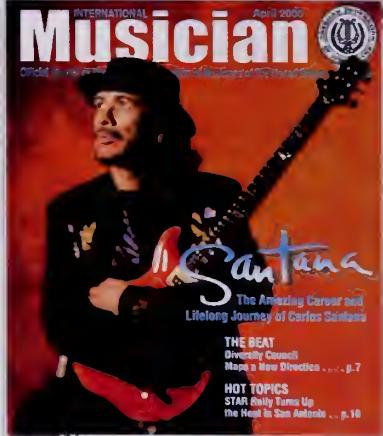
tal right already held by nearly all of our nation's workers: the right to decide whether to form and be represented by a union," says UAW President Stephen Yokich. If the NYU activists are successful, they will join about 30,000 graduate student employees at public institutions across the country who have the benefit of a union.

After the students voted in April on whether to join the UAW, the National Labor Relations Board impounded election ballots until the full NLRB rules on NYU's appeal of the regional NLRB decision.

NYU graduate student employees, who earn an average of \$10,000 a year, teach 60 percent of graduate classes and 100 percent of undergraduate classes in some instances, students say, and many have spouses and children.

As part of their voice at work campaign, student employees enlisted the support of faculty, local lawmakers and the community in their battle against NYU's efforts to prevent them from joining a union.

"Even though NYU will not acknowledge that what we do is work, it means a lot to us to have other people in the community say what we do is valuable," says Kimberly Johnson, an NYU Ph.D. candidate in American history. ☐



## Because He's So Smooth...

**W**hen legendary rock, jazz and Latin blues musician Carlos Santana took home nine Grammy Awards for his 1999 album, "Supernatural," he was recognized for a music career that spanned two generations. But the 33-year member of San Francisco Musicians Local 6 also has directed his talents and resources to enrich children's lives with art and music.

Santana and his wife, Deborah, started the Milagro (Miracle) Foundation in 1998 to support educational efforts that help children and youths live healthy, literate and culturally enriched lives. Through direct grants, it strives to assist the most at-risk and vulnerable populations so they can acquire the skills needed to succeed in life.

Santana, 52, began playing guitar at age 8. In 1966, he started the Santana Blues Band in San Francisco, building a local following that took the band to the Woodstock Music Festival and a first record contract. In the past 30 years, Santana has sold more than 40 million albums and has been honored with numerous music, civic and humanitarian awards, including induction into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

For more Santana, go to [www.santana.com/milagro](http://www.santana.com/milagro). ☐

# PACE Puts Safety on TOP

Seeking to enhance worksite safety and health, PACE International Union has incorporated the union's Triangle of Prevention (TOP) initiative in paper and petrochemical plants across the country.

Most recently, three paper plants—Georgia Pacific's Crosssett, Ark., and Branford, Pa.,

facilities and the Augusta Newsprint mill in Augusta, Ga.—have signed on. The TOP program trains union workers to become occupational safety and health education coordinators, who in turn train their fellow members to examine factors that can contribute to an accident, with an eye toward preventing mishaps. An implementation team, made up of union and management representatives, oversees the program at each facility.

At TOP worksites, PACE is seeing a 40 percent to 60 percent decrease in the number of injuries and incidents since the program began, says Glenn Erwin, PACE health and safety coordinator. Workplaces are signing on “because this is a common sense approach that makes the workplace safer.” ☐



**Members of PACE Local 8-279 at Smurfit Container Corp. in Tacoma, Wash., take in a team approach to safety and health.**

## Kaiser Coalition Expands to Nationwide Bargaining

The partnership between Kaiser Permanente and the unions that together represent 60,000 Kaiser workers has grown to include collective bargaining. The unions and the company announced a new bargaining process April 12 in which they will negotiate nationally on issues of common concern and discuss local issues separately. Bargaining talks will involve as many as 33 contracts with 26 locals of at least seven international unions. Most contracts expire in 2001, and the national talks, now under way, are



expected to be completed by September.

Before reaching the agreement, the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, formed in 1997 to give workers a voice in patient care and other issues, surveyed their members about the concerns they wanted addressed in national negotiations.

The new process will better enable the unions and management to develop the partnership, says Kathy Sackman, president of the United Nurses Association, an AFSCME affiliate and partnership member. ☐

## OUT FRONT

In case the massive rallies in Seattle and Washington, D.C., haven't convinced America's leaders that decisions about global trade and finance directly affect the lives of workers here and abroad, here are some real stories from real working people to share with them:

Ian Robertson, Steelworkers Local 937 member and Southern Arizona Central Labor Council president, lives 30 miles from the Mexican border, where maquiladora workers live on wooden pallets. Nine children died last winter trying to keep warm there, he says.

Yue Tianxiang is serving a 10-year sentence in China for “subverting the political power of the state” by publishing a workers’ rights magazine that uncovered corruption and other problems at the state-owned Tianshui City Auto Transport Co., where workers had not been paid for three years.

John Folk, a Steelworker formerly with the Huffy Corp. bike factory in Celina, Ohio, lost his job when Huffy decided to move production to Mexico and import more bikes from China.

Wendy Diaz of Honduras went to work at Global Fashion when she was 13, forced to work almost every day from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and sometimes all night long for a few dollars a day.

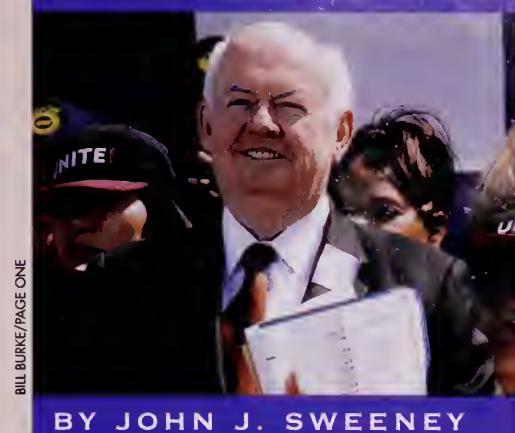
Oscar Olivera, a Bolivian machinist, had to hide for four days to escape arrest before fleeing his country. His crime? Leading a mass uprising against privatization of Cochabamba’s public water system and the excessive fees rich companies could charge for water. The World Bank had pressured Bolivia’s government to privatize as a loan condition.

Chinese auto worker Lei Wei is serving a 13-year sentence for “actively taking part in a counterrevolutionary group” by joining a workers’ forum and participating in pro-democracy marches.

Add to these the stories of tens of thousands of men and women in Africa dying from AIDS while global trade agreements prevent local manufacturing of affordable drugs to fight HIV infection. And add the stories of thousands of women and girls worldwide forced into sexual slavery by job-killing market reforms their countries adopt to satisfy international lending institutions. Add the hundreds of thousands of U.S. industrial workers who have seen their family-sustaining jobs shipped to low-wage countries, and the exploited low-wage workers in those countries who have work but no rights, no respect and no escape from poverty.

Add it all up, then get on the phone and make two calls: Dial 1-800-393-1082 to urge your members of Congress to vote against permanent Normal Trade Relations with China without annual reviews of China’s trade and human rights practices. And call 202-637-5359 or visit [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy) to join the AFL-CIO Campaign for Global Fairness. ☐

## Global Decisions, Local Pain



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# The Price of Trade with China

LAOGAI RESEARCH FOUNDATION

## IN 1957

Chinese authorities branded Harry Wu a “counterrevolutionary rightist” for his criticism of Communist Party policies—in 1960, the government sentenced him to 19 years in a laogai, or Chinese labor camp. Alone in a cell too small for him to stretch out to sleep, Wu’s only human contact was the guard on the other side of the door. He was forced to work in a coal mine and on a farm,

and the profits from his exhausting labor helped shore up China’s repressive government.

After Wu was released, he moved to the United States. But in 1995, during his third trip to China to document human rights abuses, he was arrested at the border—despite his valid U.S. passport and visa—and sentenced to 15 years on trumped-up spy charges. He was set free only as a result of international pressure.

Wu is among millions of Chinese citizens who continue to be imprisoned and tortured as part of the government’s efforts to ban such basic freedoms as speech, religion and workers’ rights. The Chinese government’s oppression of its working people enables multinational corporations operating there to profit from an environment in which abuse of workers and subsurvival wages are routine—a growing trend throughout the developing world among governments desperate for foreign capital.

Yet, despite China’s blatant and ongoing human rights abuses, Congress is considering a proposal to grant China permanent Normal Trade Relations status, which would scrap annual congressional review of that nation’s human rights and trade practices and give China permanent access to U.S. markets.

Last year, an engineer in China’s Liaoning province suffered brain damage after hours of beatings while in police custody on suspicion of theft. Police eventually determined she was innocent and released her, according to the U.S. State Department’s annual review of China’s human rights practices. But such torture is not uncommon, the report says. Detained men and women, often accused of nothing more than practicing their religion

## YUE TIANXIANG

For ignoring a government ban on politically sensitive printed materials and publishing a magazine advocating workers’ rights and “subverting the political power of the state,” Yue was detained last year in Gansu province and sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment. Yue’s publication, *China Workers Monthly*, uncovered corruption at the state-owned Tianshui City Auto Transport Co., where Yue organized legal action to try to force the employer to pay back wages to current and laid-off workers.



Where will  
the next  
president  
stand on the  
issues that  
are central to  
working  
families?

Beginning this month, **America@Work** launches a series of one-page comparisons that show where Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush stand on the issues central to the future of working families, such as affordable health care, fair wages and quality education for their children.

Each piece also is designed for AFL-CIO affiliates to distribute as fliers, include in mailings, reproduce in union publications and post on worksite bulletin boards.

*Turn to page 21 to see where the next president will stand on health care, and visit [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm) for more in-depth information on where presidential candidates stand on working family issues.*



**The price of trade: China's forced prison labor and low wages undercut wages and workers' rights in this country and around the world.**

or speaking out for democracy, endure beatings, shackles, electric shocks, "re-education through labor," prolonged solitary confinement and incommunicado detention—and many do not make it out alive.

Violence against women includes forced abortions and sterilization; women also are sold into prostitution. Some 500 Chinese women commit suicide each day—an annual rate that's triple the number of U.S. military deaths during the entire Vietnam war.

Chinese citizens who practice religion outside government-sanctioned organizations often are arrested, beaten, fined and fired from their jobs; their children are barred from school. On July 22, 1999, tens of thousands of followers of the Falun Gong spiritual movement were rounded up and detained for several days in over-crowded open stadiums with inadequate food, water and sanitary facilities. According to the report, those who refused to renounce their beliefs were expelled from their schools, fired from their jobs or beaten—some to death.

The magnitude of China's human rights abuses is mind-numbing: An estimated

1.7 million Chinese citizens were detained before 1996—and the State Department report, released Feb. 25, says the number of detainees is growing.

Frequently detained are workers seeking safety on the job, unpaid wages or a voice at work. Independent trade unions are illegal, and workers such as Yue Tianxiang who seek to exercise the freedom to organize are summarily arrested: Yue was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment after establishing China Workers Watch, an organization to defend workers' rights.

Meanwhile, multinational corporations are spending millions of dollars lobbying Congress to approve permanent NTR—to take advantage of the Chinese govern-

ment's repression, which enables multinational corporations to exploit prison laborers like Wu and other workers who earn as little as 13 cents an hour.

### **A bad deal for Chinese workers, U.S. workers—and employers**

"If the United States stops holding China accountable for its human and workers' rights violations, the suffering of the Chi-

## **KANG YUCHUN**

A medical researcher in Anding Hospital's Psychiatry Department in Beijing and a master's graduate of the Beijing College of Chinese Medicine, Kang was sentenced in 1994 to 17 years' imprisonment and four years' deprivation of political rights for conducting counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement through his alleged involvement in underground pro-democracy organizations. Kang is seriously ill with heart problems, for which he is poorly treated at Beijing's Yanqing Jail.

## **LIU JINGSHENG**

A worker at the Tongyi Chemical Plant, Liu was sentenced to a minimum 15 years' imprisonment and four years' deprivation of political rights. In 1979, Liu was detained for several months for his involvement in the 1970s "Democracy Wall" movement, in which he attempted to post public messages in central Beijing. Seriously ill, Liu has a history of gastric problems, hypertension and loss of teeth.



CHINA LABOR BULLETIN

nese people will grow, right along with our loss of jobs," says Linda Grage, a member of Teamsters Local 763. Grage helped organize the 40,000-strong demonstration at the World Trade Organization meeting last November in Seattle, where union members and community, environmental and human rights activists rallied in support of workers' and human rights in global trade agreements.

U.S. decisions on trade with China directly affect America's working families:

- The nation's \$70 billion trade deficit with China already has cost 800,000 U.S. jobs. Permanent NTR status for China would mean a bigger trade deficit and more job losses.
- China's forced prison labor and abysmally low wages undercut wages and workers' rights in this country and around the world.

## HU SHIGEN

Formerly a lecturer at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, Hu was sentenced in 1994 to 20 years for "counter-revolutionary crimes," including "organizing and leading a counterrevolutionary group" called the Free Labor Union of China. He is in Beijing No. 2 Prison, where he is seriously ill with swollen lymph nodes. Hu was arrested with 15 other union leaders, who collectively are referred to as the "Beijing 16."

"We've been told the workers in China are getting wages and benefits of 77 cents an hour," says Mike Reba, a UAW Local 469 member. Reba worked for 15 years at Master Lock in Milwaukee, and lost his job when the profitable company moved production to China and Mexico.

"I'm angry. We thought we had a secure job we could retire from," Reba says. "They lied to us. I blame it on corporate greed. They're going to pay subhuman wages to workers who can't afford to go out and buy these locks. The company made out like bandits."

At the same time, prominent dissident Wei Jingsheng says Western multinationals that support free trade with China should think twice before investing there. "The necessary procedures for having a truly open marketplace have not been achieved," says Wei, a former electrician who served nearly 20 years' imprisonment, including solitary confinement and physical abuse, for suggesting human rights should accompany economic reforms. In a country where workers have no rights and live in impoverished conditions, Wei says, businesses can't maintain productive relationships with their workers.

### Forced prison labor and stuffed animals

Across China, tens of thousands of prisoners toil in forced labor camps to produce the stuffed animals, cotton shirts, clay pottery and office binder clips sold throughout the United States.

"Most Americans would be shocked to learn that the products they buy, the clothes they wear and the toys their children play with may be made, in whole or in part, by prisoners in China—prisoners whose only crime may simply have been speaking out

against oppression," says Wu, director of the Laogai Research Foundation, which gathers and disseminates information on the world's most extensive forced labor camp system.

The exact number of "re-education-through-labor" camps, as the Chinese government calls forced prison labor facilities, is unknown, because the Chinese government does not permit independent monitoring. But Dun & Bradstreet, the respected business information service, lists nearly 100 forced labor camps in its Directory of Key Manufacturing Companies in P.R. China 1995/96. According to the Laogai Research Foundation, Dun & Bradstreet's list identifies the Nanbao New Life Salt Farm in Hebei province as "one of the largest—and for the government, one of the most profitable—forced labor camps in China," generating some \$575 million for the state over the past 35 years.

Nanbao was the last camp in which Wei was forced to work before the Chinese government bowed to international pressure in 1995 and sent him to the United States, where he is now a citizen.

### Working families tell Congress: No blank check for China!

Wei, Reba and thousands of union members provide evidence for Congress of the connection between Chinese human rights abuses, multinational greed and the loss of U.S. jobs.

In April, Wei joined 15,000 union members and their families who traveled to



Union action: Wei Jingsheng, who spent nearly 20 years in a Chinese labor camp, addresses 15,000 union members at the April 12 "No Blank Check for China" rally.

## WANG CHANGHUA

Chairman of the Hunan Workers Autonomous Federation before the crackdown on democratic protests in the spring of 1989, Wang was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment for "counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement."

Washington, D.C., as part of the AFL-CIO's ongoing, nationwide Campaign for Global Fairness. They rallied at the U.S. Capitol and visited members of Congress to urge them to say "No" to a blank check for China and "Yes" to a global economy that works for working families.

The event kicked off a coast-to-coast grassroots lobbying effort, with union members meeting with their members of Congress in their home districts during the spring congressional recesses.

Grage continues working to ensure good jobs stay at home and human and workers' rights are respected in China. "We've got to stand with our sisters and brothers who are on the front lines of the fight for democracy in China," Grage says. ☐



### Make Your Voice Heard

Congress is expected to vote on granting China permanent Normal Trade Relations status in late May. Don't miss this opportunity to make your voice heard for a global economy that works for working families.

- Visit the AFL-CIO global fairness website ([www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/index.htm)) for updates on the debate and to send an e-mail urging your senators and representative to say "No" to a blank check for China.
- Sign up to become part of the AFL-CIO's Campaign for Global Fairness. Call 202-637-5359 or e-mail [global@aflcio.org](mailto:global@aflcio.org). ☐

# Impoverished Children WORKING PARENTS



**One in seven American children—  
10 million children—is poor  
but lives with a worker in the family,  
dramatically illustrating why  
America's working families need a raise**

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI



For the past two decades, the percentage of America's children in poverty has remained untouched by the booming economy, hovering around 20 percent. Yet at the same time, the proportion of poor children in *working families* has skyrocketed.

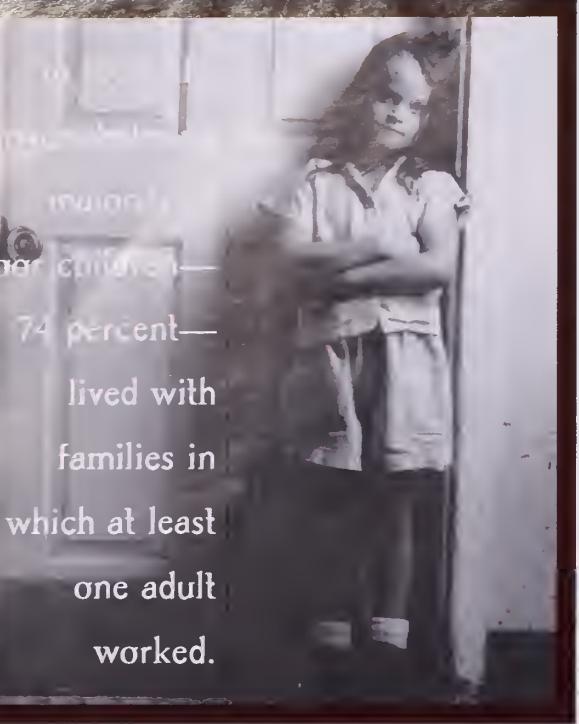
One in seven American children—10 million children—has a worker in the family, but is still poor. In 1998, the overwhelming majority of poor children—74 percent—lived in families in which at least one adult worked.

Even worse, 33 percent of all poor children lived in a family in which someone worked *full-time* and *year-round*. That percentage has gone up 20 percent since 1997, and an astonishing 53 percent since 1989, according to govern-

ment statistics cited in the annual "State of America's Children" study by the Children's Defense Fund. Another 20 percent of poor children had family members who worked part-time, but for hourly wages so low that even working full-time, year-round, would not have lifted their families out of poverty.

How did this happen? The CDF report points to two key reasons.

First, too many workers' wages have not benefited from the booming economy, and employers have grown stingy with bene-



fits. The fact that average weekly wages rose 2.7 percent above inflation in 1998—the fastest rate in 27 years and eight years into the economic boom—hasn't reversed the erosion of the value of workers' wages during the previous 25 years. Typical weekly wages fell by 2 percent between 1973 and 1999, after adjusting for inflation.

Second, those who are leaving the welfare rolls in the aftermath of 1996 reforms are being paid abysmally low wages. Parents who find work after leaving welfare almost always are paid wages too low to lift even a small family from poverty, according to data from 46 states collected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The average starting pay of \$6 to \$7 an hour for former welfare recipients in most states gets a family of three only to three-fifths of the 1999 poverty line of \$13,290 a year, so moving from welfare to work does not mean moving out of poverty.

"Unlike the Depression years, unemployment now stands at 4 percent, its lowest level in three decades," says Marian Wright Edelman, CDF president. "But for 10 million poor children who live in a family where someone works—three out of every four poor children—their parents' work has not been a sure route to economic well-being. Today's poor families need help to make their toehold in the workforce more secure."

State lawmakers should encourage job training and education for these workers to boost their earning potential, CDF recommends. A woman who didn't finish high

school was paid an average of \$6.94 an hour in 1997, while a woman with some college education was paid \$10.93. But most states are "going in the wrong direction," the report says, pushing welfare recipients off the rolls as quickly as possible without the support they need to move into family-sustaining jobs. This includes child care, which parents must have if they are to work.

When parents make low wages, they can't afford child care. And unpaid arrangements often are unstable, forcing parents to take time off work. The cost of full-day child care for one child ranges from \$4,000 to \$10,000 a year. For two parents working full-time for minimum wage, earning a total of \$21,400 a year, child care costs could consume a huge proportion of their budget.

The cost problem is not because of child care workers' wages, CDF says: "Few jobs are more important to society, yet the average salary of a child care worker is only \$14,820 a year," according to government statistics. Instead, local, state and federal governments should improve and expand child care services and employers should expand paid family leave and policies such as flextime, compressed workweeks and job sharing.

"The richest nation in the world must do more for those not benefiting from this booming economy," says Edelman. "If not when there are eight years of continuous and unprecedented economic growth, then when?"

The study, released March 24, uses federal government figures to illustrate the fragility of working families amid an economy that is creating new millionaires every week.

CDF is calling on employers and legislators to enact commonsense reforms that will improve the lot of children and their

families—not only to raise wages and improve training, but also to expand such family supports as health insurance.

In the United States, where a baby is born without health insurance every 56 seconds, 11.9 million children are without health coverage. Of those, 87 percent live in working families, and 64 percent have at least one parent who works full-time throughout the year.

"In this time of unparalleled prosperity and record low unemployment, it is simply unacceptable that there is a growing population among us that does not have health insurance for themselves and their families," said Dennis Rivera, president of Health & Human Service Employees Union 1199/SEIU and a CDF board member, at the group's annual conference in March. CDF calls for expanding health coverage to include all children and their parents.

CDF's action agenda for children and families parallels that of the union movement, calling for a federal minimum-wage increase, efforts to ensure the Earned Income Tax Credit reaches working families and enactment of local living-wage laws requiring city and state contractors to pay wages above the minimum to workers.

In a nation where one in five children lives in poverty, says Edelman, it's not too late for America to "begin to nurture its fifth child before he is beyond reach."

"The State of America's Children" is \$15.95 plus \$3 shipping and handling from the Children's Defense Fund, P.O. Box 90500, Washington, D.C. 20090-0500, 202-662-3652; website: [www.childrensdefense.org/greenbook00.html](http://www.childrensdefense.org/greenbook00.html). ☐

## A Campaign for Jobs, Income and Justice

Advocates for working families—including the AFL-CIO—are joining together in the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support. The campaign, launched May 6 in Chicago, includes dozens of grassroots groups across the nation committed to guaranteeing a voice at work, expanding health care coverage, investing in low-income communities, respecting immigrant workers and ensuring access to child care, job training and housing. Coalition partners will challenge lawmakers and corporate leaders to promote living-wage jobs and connect local initiatives with national issues.

The campaign, which recently released a report showing that 46 states have accumulated \$7 billion in unspent anti-poverty funds, will build on recent successes in increasing the minimum wage, expanding access to health insurance and other victories for working families. With unprecedented prosperity and budget surpluses at every level of government, coalition leaders say there is no better time to enact new efforts to lift families out of poverty with living-wage jobs.

To find out more, contact the Center for Community Change, 1000 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, call the campaign at 202-339-9346 or visit the website at [www.nationalcampaign.org](http://www.nationalcampaign.org). ☐

Special  
Pullout

# RECOGNIZING OUR COMMON BONDS

U.S. employers, who have a long history of exploiting fear and differences to drive wedges between workers, are exploiting immigrant workers through low wages and poor working conditions—ultimately hurting *all* workers. In response, the unions of the AFL-CIO have joined together to find solutions to the realities of a new global economy that destroys the economies of developing countries and subjects immigrants here to harsh working conditions and harassment



—By James B. Parks

**W**hen eight undocumented Mexicans working as housekeepers for Holiday Inn Express in Minneapolis joined with their fellow workers in seeking a decent wage by voting for a union with the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees, hotel management retaliated by turning them in to immigration officials.

Last October, the manager called the workers into an office where they were greeted by an Immigration and Naturalization Service agent, who promptly arrested them. The manager said he called the INS because he was afraid he would be penalized for knowingly hiring undocumented workers. "I felt a lot of rage and impotence, because we were doing nothing wrong, we were just working," says Estella Albino Granda, 29, one of the workers. "I felt that we were being discriminated against because only Hispanics were called in."

The National Labor Relations Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices ruled in January that the workers had been fired illegally and discriminated against. The hotel agreed to pay each one \$8,000 in back pay and compensatory damages. But that was little consolation to the workers, who were certain they would be deported—without a job they could not support their families or send money back home to relatives who needed help. "I am the only one who is able to help my mother back in Mexico," Norma Del Toro, 29, says through an interpreter. "We were very worried."

Their union, HERE Local 17, and the AFL-CIO took up their cause and argued that the eight should not be deported because they helped the federal agencies investigate charges of race bias, retaliation and document abuse at the hotel. The investigation and

DAVIN VILLELLA/ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS

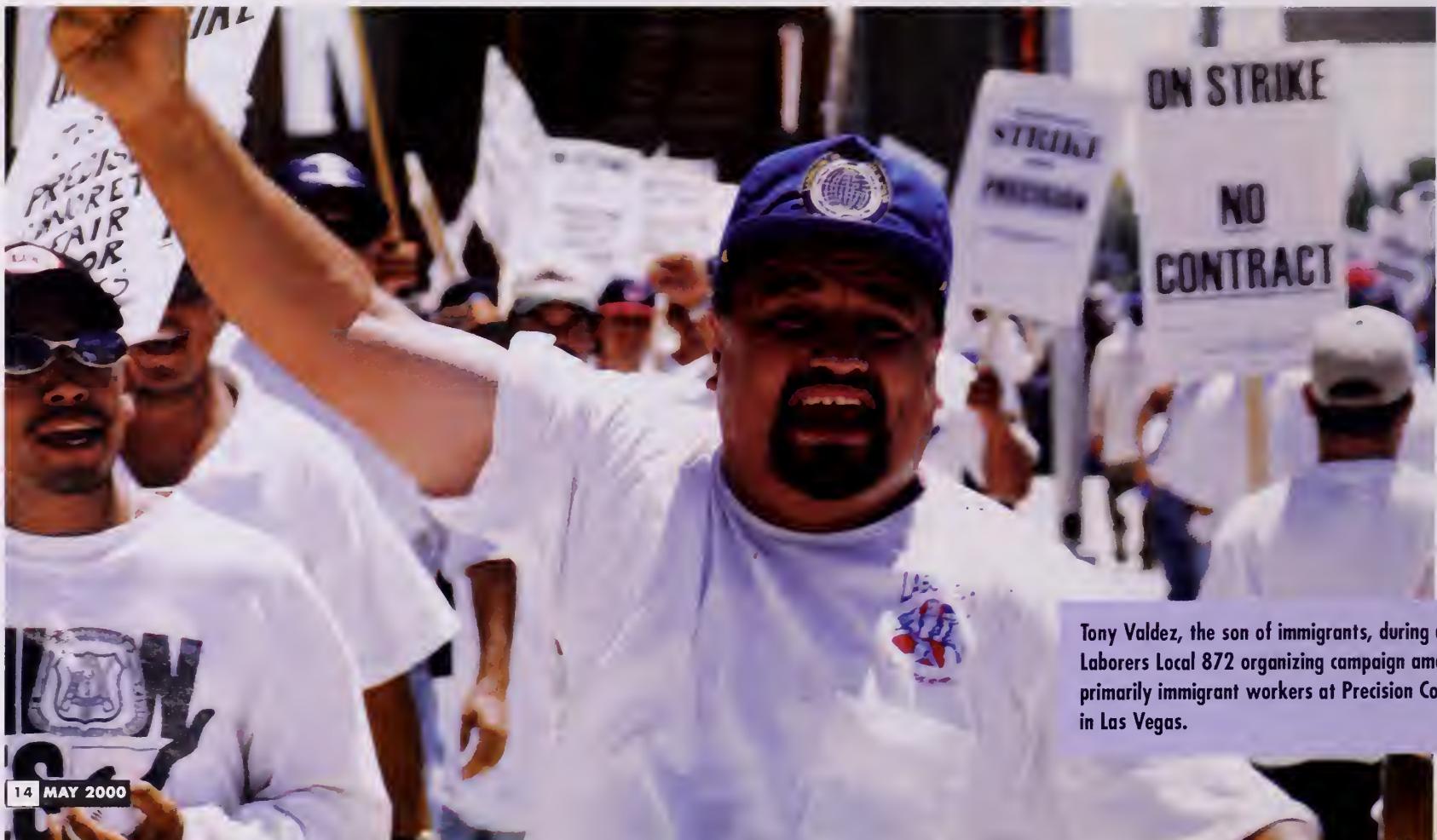


**Bruna Alvarez and her 2-year-old daughter Delia are congratulated by HERE Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer and Principal Officer Jane Rykunyk (left) April 25 after a deportation hearing in Bloomington, Minn.**

settlement "sent a powerful message to workers and employers across this country that unlawful discrimination in the workplace will not be tolerated, regardless of a person's immigration status," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said. But that message was in danger of being undermined if the workers had been forced to leave the country.

The INS agreed, and on April 25, allowed seven of the eight to stay in the country.

"I was crying the day we were arrested and I was crying the day they said we could stay, but those were tears of joy," Del Toro says.



**Tony Valdez, the son of immigrants, during a Laborers Local 872 organizing campaign among primarily immigrant workers at Precision Concrete in Las Vegas.**

Until he joined RWDSU/UFCW, Ivory Coast native Siaka Diakite pushed 90- to 100-pound loads of groceries through Manhattan in a job where he received little pay or dignity.

According to the INS, about 1.1 million people immigrate to the United States every year. Of this number, about 275,000 are undocumented. Today, about 10 percent of the U.S. population is foreign-born—a figure that hasn't changed substantially since the turn of the 20th century, when about 15 percent of the total U.S. population was born in another country. Forty percent of undocumented immigrants enter the country legally on student, tourist or other temporary visas and are classified as "illegal" after their visas expire.

More than 25 percent of new entrants into the labor market are foreign-born, coming primarily from Mexico, China, India and the Philippines, and most work in low-wage jobs. In some areas of the country, 75 percent of the low-wage market is made up of immigrants working in jobs that are less attractive for native-born workers as real wages in the low-wage sector decline.

"Many new immigrants take the jobs that Americans do not want: the dirtiest, the lowest-paid, the heaviest jobs and probably the jobs where people get hurt the most," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, herself the granddaughter of Mexican immigrants.

Roberto Lostaunau, 38, works around huge ovens at J.J. Cassone Bakery in Port Chester, N.Y., that get so hot workers faint from the heat. There is no air conditioning and he has to work for 12 hours, sometimes 14 hours a day, six days a week, for only \$6 an hour. "They make us stay until we finish all the work," he says. He has to work such long hours just to put food on the table that he doesn't spend much time with his three young daughters. "I don't have time to see my family," he says.

"When I first came here from Peru in 1996, I had a hard time," Lostaunau says. "I didn't speak English, and I was treated badly at work." One time, Lostaunau's boss fired him after claiming that he was an illegal immigrant. Lostaunau, after producing his work authorization, was rehired.

But the abuse did not stop. "The bosses scream at us and harass us," he says. He is not allowed to go to the restroom, even after working five hours straight. But he and his fellow workers, many of them illegal immigrants, are afraid to give up a steady job, even if the pay is low and the conditions unbearable.

U.S. employers have a long history of exploiting fear and differences to drive wedges between workers. Today, they use the threat of exposing undocumented workers and sending them back to their home country to force them to work long hours,

CHRIS MAYNARD



often in poor conditions and for poor wages.

But as history has shown, whenever one group of workers is denied access to workplace protections, all workers' rights are in jeopardy. "Any action to deny benefits to any workers, whether they're immigrants, women, minorities or white men, is a threat to all workers," says AFL-CIO Vice President and UNITE International Vice President Clayola Brown. "Working people don't have the luxury to be divided."

Working people such as Siaka Diakite, who, until he and 240 of his fellow workers at Hudson Delivery and Chelsea Trucking voted for a union in February, worked at least 60 hours a week delivering groceries for \$1 per delivery plus tips. Diakite's pay averaged about \$110 a week, more than half of it in tips.

"We were treated as slaves," says the 32-year-old Ivory Coast native. "You're not allowed to say anything. You're not allowed to give opinions. You have no dignity."

Diakite was required to push 90- to 100-pound loads of groceries for as many as 12 blocks in rain, snow or heat, without a back brace and without being allowed to take a lunch break. "We wanted to strike, but the majority got fired," he says.

Lostaunau and Diakite were among the workers who testified at the first of four AFL-CIO forums on immigration. The first two forums were in New York City April 1 and Atlanta April 29. The final two forums will be in Chicago June 3 and Los Angeles June 10. The forums bring immigrant workers, community and union leaders together for in-depth, full-day sessions to discuss potential solutions to the workplace problems and exploitation immigrant workers face in America today.

A huge loophole in immigration regulations makes it easy for employers to violate workers' rights. The law punishes only employ-

ers who "knowingly" hire undocumented workers. In the real world, especially with a tight labor market for low-wage jobs, employers illegally, with a wink and nod, hire undocumented workers and say nothing—so long as the workers do not complain. But when they assert their workplace rights, the employer conveniently becomes aware of their undocumented status and fires them.

"Employers have the best of all options: They can employ undocumented workers without any real fear of sanctions as long as the workers are compliant. When the workers become inconvenient, they can be discharged with no threat of retribution. This is an ideal outcome for a sweatshop employer," says Muzaffar Chishti, director of UNITE's immigration project. "In effect, employer sanctions have proven to be sanctions against employees who get abused by employers."

Some employers take advantage of immigrants with a "malicious ferocity," says Don Turner, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, "by denying health care, by denying decent wages, denying hope, and most of all, by denying the means to assert dignity."

## THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM

Immigrant workers come to the United States for many reasons: to flee political oppression, civil war or famine, or to escape religious persecution. But many come to escape a cycle of poverty created by today's corporate-driven global economy, in which employers compete for profits by locating operations where labor is cheap and workers are exploitable.

Developing country governments, desperate for foreign capital, oppress workers by opening their doors wide to multinational corporations which profit from low wages, exploiting workforces without basic rights or protections in countries with little, if any, environmental regulation. Simultaneously, such international lending institutions as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have saddled developing countries with such massive debt that they spend far more repaying loans than meeting basic needs of the citizenry. The result has been a resurgence in sweatshops, child labor and prison labor, forced labor and growing income inequality.

Three hundred million more people live in extreme poverty around the world than 10 years ago, according to the United Nations.

In this country, the restructuring of the world economy has caused a decline in manufacturing jobs in the United States and a huge increase in low-paying service jobs. As corporations move jobs out of the United States seeking the lowest wages and least regulation, standards sink for workers here and abroad.

Against this backdrop, workers in



FILE PHOTO

**HERE** President John Wilhelm chaired a committee that recommended changes to the AFL-CIO's immigration policy.

every nation are victims of corporate greed. Coming to America seems the only way to create a better life for many people in developing countries slaving for pennies an hour.

To counter the effects of corporate greed, the AFL-CIO Executive Council launched in February a Campaign for Global Fairness that will mobilize union members to insist that core workers' rights be included in all trade agreements, IMF and World Bank loans, export subsidies and import preferences.

To accomplish these goals, the campaign will include:

- Educating our members and our leaders, our allies and the general public on global inequality.
- Mobilizing union members and our allies to make workers' rights and human rights a mainstay of our trade and investment agreements and international institutions, with the defeat of permanent Normal Trade Relations with China our most immediate goal.
- Building international solidarity with our brothers and sisters in developing nations as well as in developed nations to create equitable, democratic and sustainable growth.
- Launching aggressive new initiatives to hold multinational corporations accountable by demanding that the employers with which we bargain adopt the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions code of practice for their global operations and disclose the location of their affiliates, joint venture partners and contractors internationally, especially in China.

The council also pledged to work for debt relief, canceling the debts of poor countries that can never be repaid. "In Ethiopia, more than 100,000 children die every year from diarrhea that can be treated and prevented," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said, speaking before a crowd gathered in Washington, D.C., for the April 9 Jubilee 2000 rally. The faith-based demonstration called on the world's industrialized nations and global financial institutions to break the staggering chain of debt afflicting the world's developing nations.

"But the government of Ethiopia is spending four times as much on debt payments as on its public budget for health care."

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

As poor workers emigrate here to seek a better life, the communities they join often face rapid growth and change. Residents of small towns and even big cities, especially in California, Texas, New York, Illinois and Florida, now walk down their streets and see large numbers of new neighbors who speak different languages and have distinctive cultures.

Some native-born residents react with fear and suspicion to their new neighbors, especially as such changes happen quickly and can strain public services in communities unprepared for rapid population growth. And in some communities, the funding of such services as health care and schools already is inadequate to meet the needs of all residents, whose wages all too often are inadequate to support their families and strengthen their communities.

Yet, when immigrants settle in a community, their contributions are significant: Immigrants provide more to the nation's economy and government services than they use, adding about \$10 billion each year to the U.S. economy and paying at least \$133 billion in taxes, according to a 1998 study. *A Fiscal Portrait of the Newest Amer-*

In Los Angeles, janitors in SEIU Local 1877 ended a weeks-long strike in April, winning a strong new contract.

icans, by the National Immigration Forum and the Cato Institute.

Communities become stronger and the balance between income and public services is restored when employers provide better-paying jobs, health care and safe working environments for all workers, says Kent Wong, director of the University of California-Los Angeles Labor Center. Those workers, in turn, are able to purchase more goods and pay more in taxes, generating more revenue and better enabling communities to afford increased public services.

And it is through unions that workers, including immigrants, gain better wages and are able to contribute even more to their communities, Turner says. "The middle class was not created by corporate interests, but by the union movement. Today, as 100 years ago, the union has the ability to lift up an immigrant worker and his children so they can benefit from the American Dream."

SARAH BROWN



## TAKING A BOLD STEP— A NEW AFL-CIO POLICY

The new realities of a global economy that destroys the economies of developing countries and subjects immigrants here to harsh working conditions, harassment and fear create both dilemmas and opportunities for the union movement.

In 1999, delegates to the 23rd AFL-CIO Biennial Convention formed a Special Committee on Immigration, chaired by HERE President John Wilhelm and made up of union leaders from every sector, to study and recommend changes to the AFL-CIO's immigration policy. Adopted in 1985, the policy endorsed the creation of the current system of immigration enforcement, which includes employer sanctions for hiring undocumented workers.

In February, on the committee's recommendation, the council boldly called for replacing the 1985 policy. The system, the council said, is not working because some employers skirt the law, and the federal government often is lax in administering the rules.

In its place, the council sought a new system that is orderly, responsible and fair, and urged amnesty for about 6 million undocumented workers and their families who are contributing members to their communities.

The council statement did not support illegal immigration. Instead, it called for better regulation of legal immigration. Once here, all workers, documented or undocumented, should have full workplace rights to protect their own interests and the rights of all American workers, the council said.

The council also called for unions and businesses to work together to design cooperative ways to allow law-abiding employers to satisfy legitimate needs for new workers in a timely manner with-

out compromising the rights and opportunities of workers already here. The council also said workers should be trained and educated to upgrade their skills, so that all workers can share in the nation's economic prosperity.

For Wilhelm, standing up for the rights of immigrants is good for workers, unions and communities. "We weren't trying to do anything special—we just wanted to do what was right," Wilhelm says.

Because unscrupulous employers systematically have used the current immigration process to retaliate against workers who seek to join unions or improve working conditions, the council proposed a new system of immigration enforcement strategies that focuses on criminal behavior by the employers, such as those who recruit undocumented workers from abroad, directly or indirectly. The new system would have strong penalties against employers who abuse workers' immigration status to suppress their job rights and labor protections.

Employer sanctions, as a nationwide policy applied to all workplaces, have failed, the council said, and need to be replaced with a new policy that would include:

- Reducing undocumented immigration and preventing employer abuse. A new policy should prevent employer discrimination against people who look or sound foreign; allow workers to pursue legal remedies for workplace violations, including supporting a union, regardless of immigration status; and avoid unfairly targeting immigrant workers of any particular nationality.

- Providing whistle-blower protections for immigrant workers who risk their financial or physical well-being to speak out against workplace violations.

- Granting amnesty to hard-working immigrants who make sig-

nificant contributions to their communities and workplaces. Many of these men and women are parents of children who are U.S. citizens by birthright. They should receive amnesty and be allowed to change their status to permanent residents and become eligible for naturalization.

- Halting the expansion of the guest-worker program, which allows companies to recruit foreign workers when there is a shortage of workers with a particular skill. Too often, these programs are used to discriminate against American workers, depress wages and distort labor markets. A better solution would be to train American workers for the jobs that exist.

## A UNION OF IMMIGRANTS

In many ways, the new AFL-CIO immigration policy signals a return of the union movement to its historical roots. The union movement was formed by mainly European immigrants seeking a better life. Immigrant workers were in the forefront of important early battles for workers' rights, such as the Haymarket Square explosion in 1886, which led to the eight-hour workday.

Although trade unions welcomed European immigrants, for many years they worked to exclude immigrants from South America and Asia and freed former African slaves. Employers used immigrants of color and freed slaves as strikebreakers and as surplus labor to drive down wages. Employers also used the resulting suspicion toward immigrants of color as a wedge to prevent worker solidarity—and

they were successful. Unions supported legislation in the 1880s and early 1900s to ban Chinese labor. In 1919, the AFL convention passed resolutions favoring the prohibition of immigration of Mexican workers and Asian labor.

World War I unleashed a fear of foreigners and a fear of radicalism that employers and the government used to effectively attack unions, especially those with foreign-born members. But by the 1930s and 1940s, the political landscape of the United States changed. Labor, particularly industrial unions, strongly supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt's re-elections, as did children of turn-of-the-century immigrants and African Americans who had migrated to the North to take industrial jobs. The unions that helped organize the African American community for FDR established links that later facilitated organizing in the industrial sector. Union membership surged, particularly in auto, steel, mining and textiles. Many of the new members were people of color, immigrants and women.

Anti-labor politicians and employers launched a counterattack against the new surge in organizing and drove a wedge between workers by playing to fear over the spread of Communism and a suspicion of foreigners. Some union leaders were accused of being Communist agitators. Employers also hired private police to help put down strikes.

The union movement grew again during World War II, when the nation's industries were working at full capacity to support the war effort. After the war, the combination of reduced production and the return of thousands of veterans seeking jobs led to a labor surplus and unemployment. In response, unions sought to protect the jobs of their members and create new jobs. In 1947, the AFL opposed the admission of immigrants from war-ravaged nations for fear they would create what a convention resolution that year called an "unemployment problem."

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the union movement continued to monitor immigration laws with an eye toward protecting the interests of its members, who were predominantly white and of European origin. But as an important part of the civil rights movement, the union movement also took up its moral obligation to represent all types of workers. One of the leaders who helped the union movement accept this responsibility was César Chávez, founder of the Farm Workers.

In 1985, the AFL-CIO convention passed a resolution calling for "substantial" employer

**César Chávez was among union leaders helping the union movement to accept its responsibility to represent all workers.**



PAI PHOTO SERVICE

sanctions for hiring undocumented workers, stating that jobs were a "lure" inducing people to enter the country illegally. Support for the sanctions was conditioned on providing protections against discrimination based on national origin and on granting amnesty to "settled, contributing members of their communities" who were undocumented. The new AFL-CIO resolution, passed in February, replaces the 1985 statement.

By the end of the decade, the AFL-CIO responded to documented reports of widespread discrimination against workers who appeared to be foreign by calling for increased enforcement of anti-bias laws.

More recently, the AFL-CIO has played a key role in strengthening workplace rights in the enforcement of immigration laws, including persuading the Labor Department to stop inspecting workers' immigration papers while examining complaints of labor standards abuses. The AFL-CIO also has led the fight against efforts by members of the far right to blame immigrant workers for economic problems. The federation and many affiliated unions campaigned against Proposition 187 in California in 1994 which, among other things, would have denied children of undocumented workers the right to attend school and reduce available health care services.

Unions and immigrant supporters were instrumental in persuading Congress and the White House in 1996 to partially restore some basic federal benefits that had been taken away. But for workers such as Estella Granda and Roberto Lostaunau, it's clear more needs to be done.

### WHEN ONE WORKER IS CHEATED, ALL WORKERS ARE CHEATED'

The plight of immigrants has a direct impact on all U.S. workers. Because undocumented workers often are afraid to speak up for fear of being found out, employers use them as a wedge to force down standards and pay throughout an industry. If employers believe they can get away with treating immigrants poorly, they will find ways to pit these workers against higher-paid, often union workers, and try to force down the pay scale.

Although native-born workers may blame immigrant workers in low-wage jobs for lowering wages, immigrants share the same problems as other workers in traditionally poorly paid positions—women, young African American men and workers with little education. In Houston, where one-third of the population consists of immigrants, building trades unions began to organize immigrants after they found in 1998 that contractors were paying Latino workers less than the prevailing wage.

"The union movement generally bemoans that our jobs are taken away by immigrants. I've heard that for 30 years," says Richard Shaw, secretary-treasurer of the Harris County (Texas) Central Labor Council. "But the reality is that these immigrant workers are being cheated. And when one worker is cheated, all workers are cheated."

In Florida, where much of the workforce is agricultural, employers use temporary guest workers to maintain a pool of surplus labor and force down wages, says Florida AFL-CIO President Marilyn Lenard.

**"The union changed my life," says Maria Petrosova, who immigrated from Slovakia in 1995.**

"A lot of unscrupulous employers are using the guest-worker program to bring in workers who are not really needed," she says. "Employers in the farm industry like to say that when there's a surplus of workers, supply and demand push wages down. But the truth is that whenever they see that labor surplus being reduced, they cry to the government that they need to recruit more immigrant workers rather than pay a decent wage to the ones who are working here."



ED KEATING/INT'L PICTURES

### THE VALUE OF A UNION

Unions once focused much more on organizing high-wage jobs in which there were few women and minority workers. But because of their strong connections to the civil rights movement, unions took up the mantle to represent all types of workers. Following the shift in the U.S. economy from high-wage manufacturing jobs to low-wage service jobs, unions were well-positioned to reach out to the workers in the service sector. In making organizing a top priority, unions sought to represent those workers, including immigrants and women, who are among the fastest-growing groups in the workforce.

Maria Petrosova knows the value of a union contract. Petrosova, 45, immigrated from Slovakia in 1995 and got a job as a housekeeper making \$6 an hour. She taught herself English, and as her language skills improved, she sought and gained a higher-paying job in 1997 in asbestos removal.

Unlike her housekeeping job, the asbestos removal work is unionized. Before the asbestos workers gained a voice on the job with the Laborers, they made \$13 an hour and had no face masks or protective gear to prevent exposure to the carcinogenic asbestos. Now, they have all those protections and make as much as \$21.45 an hour. "The union changed my life," Petrosova says.

Siaka Diakite and his fellow workers no longer have to carry those heavy loads of groceries for little or no pay because they won the right to choose the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union District Council/UFCW and signed a new contract. "Now with the union, we can say what we want to say without fear." The workers have eight-hour shifts, a lunch break and medical insurance. "But most of all," Diakite says, "now we are being treated with dignity and respect."



More than 600,000 workers joined unions last year, for a net increase of 265,000, the largest increase in two decades, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This milestone represents a turning point in rebuilding the union movement. For the movement to grow and increase union density, unions need to organize a million workers each year—400,000 more than were organized last year.

By organizing new groups of workers, the union movement will be able to increase the overall influence of working families in politics, in the economy and in the workplace. "It's plain and simple: Numbers are power," Turner says. In Las Vegas, the building trades signed up more than 7,000 new members, mostly Latino, between 1997 and 1999, through a two-year organizing campaign. In the 1998 elections, pro-worker candidate Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) was re-elected by 5,000 votes, a margin he attributed to the building trades' support and unions' renewed strength in numbers.

New immigrant workers have an intensity and passion about joining unions that energize the entire union movement, says Miguel Contreras, president of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. In California, thousands of mostly Latino janitors walked out in April in an unfair labor practice strike, demanding a raise of \$1 an hour. The janitors are members of SEIU Locals 1877 and 8028.

In Las Vegas, HERE has organized thousands of hotel, restaurant and casino workers, many of them immigrants. In 1991, members of Culinary Workers Local 226 and Bartenders Local 165 went on strike against the Frontier Hotel and Gambling Hall in Las Vegas. Throughout the six-and-a-half-year strike, not one of the 550 mostly immigrant strikers crossed the picket line. The workers won a new contract when the property was bought by a new owner. In October 1998, the union won another tough struggle when the new Bellagio Resort Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas agreed to recognize HERE as the representative for some 4,300 workers.

"Immigrant workers are leading the way," Contreras says. "Just like immigrants did in the early 1900s on the East Coast, they look to unions to help give them a better life for their families. And they are militant, and that gives energy to the rest of the union movement."

Julio Garcia symbolizes that passion and energy. The 23-year-old Las Vegas construction worker and his two brothers were among the

Immigrant workers organizing at Kukurin Concrete in Las Vegas waged a successful strike in 1998, winning a written agreement that the company will provide water on the job and observe meal breaks.

130 workers who walked out on their own in July 1998 to protest nonunion Kukurin Concrete's unfair labor practices. When some of his co-workers returned to work, Garcia refused. "I wanted to go union. I told them I would make this company go union by myself." He volunteered to work 18 hours a day to organize. He even brought two of his children, now 4 years old and 22 months old, to the job site. Now a member of Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 79, Garcia says he

would do it again. "Whatever I lost during the strike, I won back when I got the chance to join the union."

As an advocate for social and economic justice for all people, the union movement has declared the freedom to choose a union the civil rights issue of the 21st century. Unions also have a responsibility to fight for good jobs for everyone, because unions provide a good living for workers and help build better communities.

The Carpenters union is among those reaching out to immigrants. In Cincinnati, the UBC and community groups set up an immigrant-owned construction company that hires undocumented, nonunion immigrant workers, helps them become documented and assists them in becoming union members. The immigrant workers become U.S. citizens, pay taxes and get pensions. Because the undocumented workers were paid less than market wage and now receive union wages, the pressure to lower wages in the area's construction industry is lessened. And contractors, who were facing a skilled labor shortage, gain new, trained workers.

## RECOGNIZING OUR COMMON BONDS

How the union movement reaches out to immigrant workers cuts to the heart of what unions are all about. Many union members, ambivalent and unsure of the AFL-CIO's policy on immigration, are uncertain as to whether the changes they see in their workplaces and in their communities are good for them and their families.

In a global economy, in which employers pit workers against each other, the fate of both native-born workers and immigrant workers are linked. Employers that try to exploit immigrant workers are the same ones that fight all workers' rights. The most effective way to counter the strength and financial resources of exploitative employers is through a strong union movement that includes all workers, regardless of where they were born, their race, gender or sexual orientation. Unions can most effectively advocate for working families when we recognize our common bonds and work together to tackle tough issues. ☐

For more information on the AFL-CIO Executive Council's statement on immigration, visit [www.aflcio.org/publ/estatements/feb2000/ec\\_immigr.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/publ/estatements/feb2000/ec_immigr.htm).

# Where Will the Next President Stand on Health Care?



## Will he support:

### Making Health Care a Priority?

Al Gore consistently has proven that he is committed to providing universal, high-quality, affordable health care to every single American. (World News Now, Nov. 11, 1999)

Since George W. Bush became Texas governor in 1995, his aides admit "he has not made health care a priority." (The New York Times, April 11, 2000)

### A Strong or Weak Patients' Bill of Rights?

Gore backs a strong Patients' Bill of Rights, such as the one passed in 1999 by the U.S. House of Representatives with bipartisan support that allows patients to hold health plans accountable and ensures access to emergency rooms and prescription drugs. (Democratic debate, Manchester, N.H., Jan. 26, 2000)

Bush supports the weak Patients' Bill of Rights proposed by Senate Republicans that excludes 100 million people in "self-funded" health plans, gives health plans the final say on medical treatment decisions and lacks such important patient protections as access to specialists. As governor, Bush vetoed a patient protection bill because he said it placed too many new regulations on managed care organizations. (The New York Times, March 20, 2000)

### Health Care for All Children or Just Some?

Gore wants to insure every child in America. He seeks to expand the 1997 Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to include children in families earning up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four—or \$41,750—and to enable all other families to buy into the program voluntarily. (National Association of Children's Hospitals survey, Jan. 8, 2000)

Texas under Bush has the highest percentage of children without health insurance of any state, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Yet Bush tried to restrict CHIP eligibility. Under Bush, Texas was one of the last states to take part in CHIP. (The Sacramento Bee, Aug. 29, 1999)

### Check Their Records

#### Longtime Champion of Health Care

As vice president, Gore fought for the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that helps people keep their health coverage when they change jobs. He has been a strong advocate of the Family and Medical Leave Act that was signed into law in 1993. He also fought for the \$24 billion Children's Health Insurance Program. Since Gore became vice president, federal funding for breast cancer research, prevention and treatment has doubled.

#### Texas Ranks Last in Health Coverage

Bush consistently has failed to make health care available in his five years as governor of Texas, where 200,000 children are uninsured and where fewer women have health insurance than in any other state. In April, Bush announced a tax credit program he described as a major health care initiative. In fact, the program would make health insurance more affordable only to a tiny percentage of people who make too much to qualify for Medicaid and whose employers don't provide it.

**A recent U.S. Census Bureau study shows that under Bush, Texas ranks worst in the nation in percentage of population with health insurance.** According to The Wall Street Journal: "Another vulnerable area for Mr. Bush is the uninsured problem in Texas. Even some Bush supporters wince at these numbers: In 1998...24.5 percent of Texans had no health insurance....Per capita spending for prenatal care and public health is among the lowest nationwide." (March 16, 2000) ☐

— A Message From Your Union

# Getting Respected

# Getting Elected

The candidates working families send to office in the upcoming presidential and congressional elections are the lawmakers who will determine whether Social Security is strengthened or privatized, whether America's schools are rebuilt and improved and whether consumers can get the quality health care they need.

In state legislatures, the newly elected lawmakers will decide whether to grant collective bargaining for public employees and will side either with Big Business or workers when workers' compensation reforms come up for a vote.

And in communities around the country, November's election winners

will enact or reject living-wage laws and Voice@Work resolutions.

That's why one of the key planks in the AFL-CIO's Labor 2000 program is helping elect candidates to public office who understand the dilemmas American working families face—and who understand better than union members?

Launched in 1997, the AFL-CIO's *2000 in 2000* initiative seeks to strengthen the voice of working families by identifying, training and recruiting 2,000 union members to run for office in the 2000 election cycle—from school boards to city councils, from state legislatures to mayor's offices and even the U.S. Congress.

The union men and women running for office share a common bond: They under-

stand the concerns of working families. Here's a look at how three union members—Steelworker Ed O'Brien, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers/AFT member Julie Sabo and Mark Lohan, a member of Painters and Allied Trades—will translate those concerns into legislative action.

## Ed O'Brien: Union by choice

USWA member Ed O'Brien, a candidate for Pennsylvania's 15th congressional district, understands how important it is to preserve and strengthen Social Security. When he was 10 months old, his father was killed in World War II, and Social Security was a critical safety net for him, his mother and his six brothers and sisters.

Strengthening Social Security is just one of O'Brien's goals in seeking to represent the families in eastern Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, where he is advancing a Working Families Agenda against first-term Rep. Pat Toomey's 11 percent working families voting record.

"I don't know how Mr. Toomey could vote against things like the Patients' Bill of Rights or more teachers and smaller classes, or support normal trade with China, a country that uses slave, prison and child labor," O'Brien says. "I just don't think he's a good representative for working families, union or not."

O'Brien says his opponent already has tried to crudely paint him, a 36-year USWA member, as a "union boss." But he says the

overused slur doesn't bother him a bit, because he takes the advice he gives other potential union member-candidates: "You've got to have the fire in your belly to stand up for working families, and you have to be able to stand up in front of a group of people and tell voters you are proud to be a union member. I say I am American by birth and union by choice."

The 55-year-old O'Brien, who serves as eastern director for USWA District 10 and is a vice president of the state AFL-CIO, knows it's going to be tough to match Toomey's business-backed financial resources. O'Brien is counting on the Lehigh County Labor Council, area unions and the Steelworkers' Rapid Response system, which connects local unions with faxes and e-mails, to speed mobilization efforts.

## Union Members on the Campaign Trail for a Working Families Agenda

BY MIKE HALL



PAINTERS AND ALLIED TRADES DISTRICT COUNCIL 35

"Hey, the guy's a millionaire, but we've got the grassroots," O'Brien says. "We've got 400 people on the ground as of May, walking precincts, making phone calls. On top of that, the issues that are important to voters today are exactly the issues that I've been fighting for, for a long time. With hard work, this is a winnable race."

### Julie Sabo: A better future for our children

In the nine years she has been an elementary school teacher in Minneapolis, Julie Sabo has seen a disturbing and growing trend: Public schools increasingly are

COURTESY SABO/CAMPAGN



Sabo

becoming segregated along economic and racial lines.

"Most of my students have been homeless at one time, and the number of low-income kids who qualify for free school meals is in the 90th percentile. "You just can't sit there and watch it happen,"

Sabo says.

So Sabo, a Minnesota Federation of Teachers Local 59 member, is taking action by running for a seat in the state Senate, where one of her key goals will be to show the interdependence of quality education, good jobs, affordable housing and accessible transportation.

Sabo says if there are no good-paying jobs in a community, working families have two choices: move to where the jobs are—an option most can't afford—or find transportation. But when families are caught in a vicious cycle of low-paying jobs and inadequate housing with no means of getting to better-paying jobs, they are segregated from the benefits of a strong economy.

"To improve education, we have to attack community issues, such as affordable housing, transportation and livable-wage jobs. These are the issues that are affecting the education of our kids," says Sabo, a fourth-grade teacher at North Star Elementary School.

Long active in the MFT, Sabo says her experience as co-chair of the union's legislative committee convinced her that to address these problems, the legislature needed "a broader base"—someone with a different perspective and a union background.

"I got on the phone and started making phone calls to people in my union, to people I've met in other unions and to friends and neighbors, and said, 'This is what I want to do and I need your help.' It was amazing to see how many people came forward in the old-fashioned spirit of unions—people working together," Sabo recalls.

With the endorsement of MFT and the Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council, Sabo knows she has the advantage of people-powered politics—a pool of union activists and volunteers to help get her message to worksites and to working families through precinct walks and phone calls. It's that kind of support that can enable her to win the state Senate race—and ensure a better future

for Minneapolis school children and a strong voice for their working families.

### Mark Lohan: A fair shake for working families

Mark Lohan's introduction to political activism came early. As a high school student in Cork City, Ireland, Lohan joined in struggles for fair housing laws, pro-worker employment policies and voting rights. He grew up as Cork City's major industries, Ford Motor Co. and Dunlop Tire, where his father worked, shut down—and saw firsthand how drastically plant closures affect working families.

Today, the 32-year-old Painters and Allied Trades organizer has taken his fight for a fair shake for working families to Braintree, Mass., about 10 miles south of Boston, where he won a seat on Braintree's Town Meeting Assembly last month.

"My central goal is enforcement of the responsible contractor ordinance, so people doing business with the city have to provide medical coverage for their workers and take part in apprenticeship programs," he says. Enforcement of the prevailing-wage law is another key issue, says Lohan, who joined the union in 1994 and worked as a painter before becoming a full-time organizer.

Although Massachusetts has a prevailing-wage law, Lohan knows through his work as an organizer that the law is not always enforced; he also is aware of the schemes some contractors use to dodge the wage rule. Lohan plans to make sure that neither Braintree nor contracted workers fall prey to scams.

With the strong backing of his union, and support for his victorious campaign from the Greater Boston Labor Council and the South Shores Building Trades Council, Lohan says he plans to help ensure that the town's \$80 million annual budget is directed toward enacting socially responsible legislation.

Although Lohan says he misses his homeland and acknowledges his deep love for Ireland, the father of two, with another on the way, finds fulfillment in his union organizing efforts and his struggle to make Braintree a better place for working families.

"I've seen the view from the bottom rung of the economic ladder. I want to make sure working families have a better chance to climb higher than that." @



2000 in 2000 winner: Painters and Allied Trades organizer Mark Lohan won a seat on the Braintree (Mass.) town council this spring.



IUE

Retirement security? Janet Farkoth worries that her pension from GE may not keep up with the cost of living.

When negotiations begin May 30 between General Electric and the 14 unions in the Coordinated Bargaining Committee that represents GE workers, the impact of the talks will extend far beyond the manufacturing industry and the 37,000 union members covered by the contract.

GE is an influential player in the global economy and has been one of the most aggressive companies, squeezing workers and communities worldwide. The union movement has come together to fight for fair treatment for those who helped build the company—and to demonstrate to other companies that GE's low-road tactics lower the standard of living for workers here and across the world.

"Any corporation that operates globally can look around the world to see what areas offer what they want to make them more profitable, such as low wages, no right to organize and few environmental regulations," says James Crotty, economics professor at the University of Massachusetts. In fact, Crotty says, wages around the world have been driven down so much by the race to the bottom that in the 1990s, the world economy overall saw the lowest growth since World War II.

Last year, GE reported \$112 billion in revenue—more than the combined gross domestic products of 130 nations. With after-tax profits of \$10.7 billion, GE became the world's first corporation to exceed \$10 billion in profits. In January 2000, GE's total stock value was \$505 billion, second only to Microsoft's. GE's \$50.2 billion pension fund has twice as much as it needs to meet its obligations.

# GETTING and Standing Up to GE

BY JAMES B. PARKS

Yet, GE has sought to fatten its profits even more by closing plants and moving jobs out of the country. In the decade after 1986, GE's U.S. workforce dropped 50 percent to 160,000, while its foreign employment has nearly doubled to 143,000—some 46 percent of its total workforce.

CBC Chair Edward Fire says bargaining issues are "not a question of profitability."

"The problem is GE workers never know when they go to work if that's going to be the day that they say, 'that's all folks.' " Fire, president of IUE, which represents the majority of GE's union workers, says CBC unions plan to take a strong stand for contract language to deter plant closings.

The company also is demanding that suppliers slash costs by 10 percent to 14 percent each year, according to *Business Week* magazine, and is strong-arming suppliers to move to low-wage Mexico, where GE already employs 30,000 workers. GE has been holding seminars to instruct its suppliers on how to move U.S. production south of the border, *Business Week* reports. "It's bad enough that GE has already destroyed many communities with job cuts and plant closings, but to force suppliers to do the same and sacrifice even more good American jobs for added profit is obscene," says Machinists Vice President Bob Thayer, vice chair of the CBC.

## Worldwide network-building

Seeking to ensure workers get a fair contract, the CBC launched a GEt Up and Stand Up to GE campaign to spread the word about GE's tactics and build union solidarity. The

campaign kicked off during protests last November at the World Trade Organization's meeting in Seattle, where the CBC sponsored a float depicting GE plants that have been closed. The float carried a quote from company CEO Jack Welch, whose 1999 compensation and stock option package totaled \$92.6 million: "Ideally, you would have every plant you own on a barge" to allow the company to move jobs at will.

The Seattle demonstration was part of union members' worldwide network-building effort to respond to greed-driven globaliza-



Getting set: IUE President Edward Fire (foreground) and CWA President Morton Bahr discuss the coordinated bargaining campaign of the unions representing workers at GE.

tion that moves good American jobs to countries where workers are paid pennies an hour. CBC unions and the AFL-CIO are working with GE unions worldwide to coordinate bargaining across national borders, support organizing and recognition campaigns and fight for internationally recognized labor standards wherever GE operates.

# The Company With the Biggest







**Moving to Mexico:** Ed Ribidoux lost his job at the GE manufacturing plant in Fitchburg, Mass., in 1998 after GE transferred nearly 400 jobs to Mexico.

In March, union members who work for GE in 20 countries met in Washington, D.C., to coordinate efforts to monitor the company's actions worldwide. The IMF-GE World Council is part of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), which has established a GE database to provide updated information on new plants, wages, benefits and health and safety conditions around the world. The delegates approved a plan of action to share data and work together to hold GE accountable for its actions.

#### **Nationwide solidarity**

At the same time they are crafting international support, CBC unions are building worker solidarity across this country. Thousands of GE employees wore buttons and stickers to work March 2 to make it clear they want a fair contract. Workers will continue to make their voices heard through a series of rallies for justice from April 8 to June 25, when the current contract expires.

"When GE closed the plant in Memphis, lots of workers were displaced, not because they weren't good workers, but because they couldn't make enough money to satisfy GE's greedy appetite," says Tennessee AFL-CIO Labor Council President James Neeley. "There is nothing good about a plant closing. Families are uprooted, mothers and fathers are laid off. All that's happening here because of GE."

Nate Evans knows firsthand how much the workers need justice and the ruthless

tactics GE uses to make more money. After working at GE for 21 years, including 10 years at GE's turbine plant in Fitchburg, Mass., Evans and about 400 fellow members of IUE Local 286 were laid off in 1998 when GE closed the plant and transferred the work to Mexico.

"They wanted to maximize their profits—there's no other way to say it," says Evans, 43, the father of two grown children. "It would have been different if they had said that there was no more work or that business had dried up. But the fact of the matter is that we were busy when they closed the plant. It was strictly a greed move."

The past two years have been hard on Evans and his co-workers. Many of his fellow union members have divorced since the layoff because of financial problems, and Evans and his family had to lower their standard of living drastically.

"It's hard not to feel like a failure," he says. "But the big picture is that it was strictly an economic decision."

#### **Retirement security**

CBC unions also are seeking a decent retirement income for those who helped build the company. In 1999, GE pension fund assets yielded four times more income than was paid out in benefits. Under the law, GE has not had to make any contributions to the pension trust since 1986 because the fund is more than 150 percent funded. Yet, employees are required to contribute 3 per-

cent of their pay above \$30,000 every year—an amount that has totaled more than \$1 billion since 1988. GE has announced it would increase pensions for the first time in four years effective May 1. The action comes because a "strong, increasing drumbeat of active and retired union members protested against the pension fund's overfunding while many retirees receive poverty-level pension incomes," Fire said.

Shirley Barron, 63, who retired in 1997 after 19 years at GE's Lexington, Ky., plant, knows all about the inequity in GE pensions: While Welch has stockpiled an annual pension benefit worth \$8.4 million, Barron is getting \$482 a month—half her salary at the headlight factory—and until May 1 had not had a cost-of-living increase since she retired. "I think the raise was just a ploy to save face before the negotiations started. They just did it because everybody was having rallies. They still need to make cost-of-living a permanent part of the contract and not just something they do when they feel like it," says Barron, a member of Electrical Workers Local 1627.

Pensions are an important issue also for Janet Farkosh, a member of IUE Local 707. The 61-year-old has worked at GE's Euclid, Ohio, plant for 21 years—and as she approaches retirement, she is worried whether her pension will even keep up with the cost of living. "It seems like GE is making all the money and the retirees never see a raise. The cost of living goes up and the retirees never see more in their checks. It's not right."

CBC unions' strategy for current and retired workers includes enlisting stockholder allies in the fight for a fair contract. At an April 26 GE stockholders meeting, workers who own stock in the company and their allies sought three resolutions designed to make GE comply with international labor standards. Other campaign actions, including rallies across the country, will escalate as negotiations approach.

"Too many American corporations would like to be like GE. They're waiting and watching to see what GE gets away with—and they'll try to copy it," says Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger. "We believe that the communities which GE has trampled and those which could be its next victims will work with us to GET Up and Stand Up to GE."

For more information on the campaign and negotiations, visit the website at [www.gecontract2000.com](http://www.gecontract2000.com). @

# Profits in the World

# Workers' Comp:

## The Shredded Safety Net

**In state after state,  
Big Business is  
finding ways to deny  
workers their rights  
under the law when  
they are injured or  
die on the job**

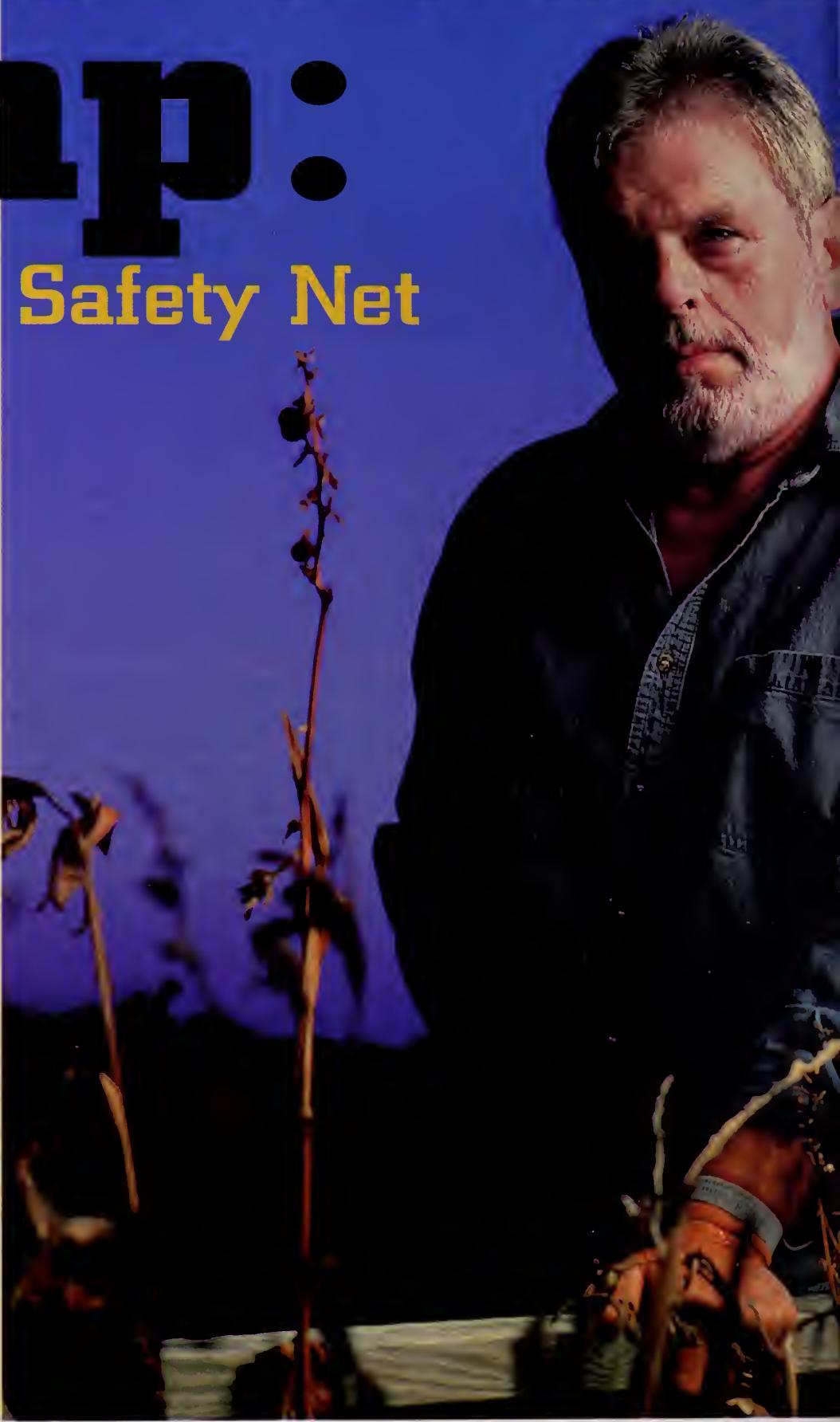
BY MARLYS HARRIS

### Ten years ago,

Jim Stotts was a solid member of the middle class with a \$33,000-a-year job as foreman of a city utility plant in Lafayette, La., a homeowner with \$30,000 in retirement savings. But in 18 months, he lost it all.

During a week when other workers were sent home so several tanks could be repainted at the plant, Stotts was exposed to toxic solvent fumes. He suffered dizziness, nausea,

JOHN FREULICH





sky-high blood pressure, headaches and difficulty walking. The doctor recommended by his employer diagnosed his condition as toxic encephalopathy, a form of brain dam-

age, and told him he couldn't work. The city of Lafayette, however, refused to accept the diagnosis and turned down Stotts' claim for workers' compensation—the program

## **When Jim Stotts' claim for workers' comp was turned down, he lost his job and his health insurance, and used up his retirement savings to pay medical costs.**

that pays injured workers' medical care and lost wages. The city's risk manager said tests showed no brain damage. Stotts turned to his own health insurance for medical care and was forced to cash in his retirement plan to pay living expenses. As a final insult, the city terminated him and he lost his medical coverage.

**Like many workers seriously injured on the job, Stotts found how effective Big Business has been** in ensuring workers don't have access to workers' compensation. In the past 10 years, 29 states, at the urging of insurance carriers and business lobbyists, have passed reform laws designed to lower costs. And costs have been lowered—for insurers, which now enjoy bigger profits, and for businesses, which have received astounding cuts in premiums. But those benefits have come largely at the expense of injured workers. For them, the new laws have raised eligibility requirements, shortened payment periods and put workers' medical treatment largely in the hands of insurance companies that can delay or deny care—a tactic adjusters call "starving them out." While waiting for help, workers spend down their savings and, in desperation, eventually accept a small settlement that doesn't come close to compensating them.

As one effort to gut workers' comp, the insurance industry unleashed a public relations campaign in numerous states that

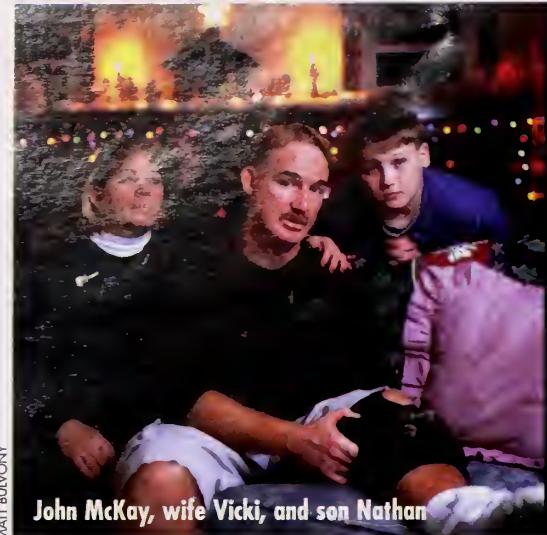
played up the erroneous stereotype of a worker who files for compensation but isn't really sick or injured. Videotapes culled from private investigators depicting workers on compensation shoveling snow or waterskiing were released to local TV outlets in an effort to show that fraud was widespread.

While there is some abuse, Conning & Co., an insurance industry research firm, estimates that fraudulent claims constitute only 1.9 percent of premiums paid—a far cry from the 30 percent claimed by the insurance industry. Injured workers, however, now are stigmatized as cheats. Only 46 percent of the public thinks that most comp claims are truthful, according to a *Consumer Reports* survey. As one injured worker remarked, "Even your neighbors look at you like you're a fraud."

**In many states, the burden now is on workers to prove their injuries occurred as a result of their job** and not poor health habits, aging or pre-existing medical conditions. In Oregon, if a worker cannot provide documented proof that 51 percent of the cause of the injury is work, the claimant gets nothing. The result is that ill and injured workers must fight a series of battles, first to get medical attention, then to get a fair assessment of any permanent disability and finally to win a hearing if there's a dispute.

In 38 states, insurance companies require workers to see a doctor from a company-approved list or managed care program controlled by the insurer that doles out treatment in stingy doses. Dr. Harvey Baumann, a Providence, R.I., surgeon, says when he requests physical therapy for a patient, the insurer does not pay for sufficient sessions, requiring him to convince the insurer his patient needs more therapy. By the time the patient gets the care, the value of the first sessions is lost. Withholding or denying care has cut the annual rise in comp medical expenses from 11 percent in the 1980s to 3 percent in the past 10 years—at the expense of such workers as Paul Nessmith.

Nessmith, a Florida carpenter, injured his knee in a fall from a scaffold in 1993, when he was 23. The insurer, Associated Industries of Florida, took four months to approve the surgery he needed, and by the



MATT BULVONY

time it was performed, it was too late to succeed. Permission for a second operation came so slowly that it, too, failed. Meanwhile, the insurer cut Nessmith's lost-time benefits, insisting he could find work even though he needed a cane and a brace to walk and lacked training in other fields. His wife, Susan, couldn't work because she was caring for their baby, who was born only a few months after her father's injury.

The family scraped along, borrowing from friends, until Miami lawyer Andrea Wolfson finally won back Nessmith's benefits. The insurer paid back payments but refused to pay any more, forcing Nessmith back to court. Discouraged, Nessmith committed suicide in March 1998 by taking an overdose of prescription drugs. Two days after he died, the insurer declared him permanently and totally disabled and awarded his wife a death benefit. Associated Industries declined to comment.

**Getting medical care and lost wages depends on the opinion of a so-called independent medical examiner (IME)** who assesses a patient's condition. IMEs are paid by the insurer—and handsomely, averaging about \$507 per consultation—for reviewing a patient's medical records, conducting an interview and examination and writing a report. A negative report from an IME can result in an insurance company's decision to cut off benefits immediately and unilaterally. Injured workers with whom reporters from *Consumer Reports* spoke, however, say IMEs clearly hadn't read their records, had performed cursory examinations and even

**Although he was declared permanently and totally disabled, John McKay's insurer forced him to take a job where he had to double the number of painkillers to get through the day.**

had altered reports to please insurers.

Mary Jeffords, 43, of Sanborn, N.Y., has needed two canes to walk as a result of being brutally beaten 12 years ago by a patient in a mental health facility where she worked. The insurer, Liberty Mutual, contested her claim, shopping her around to various IMEs. After the insurer contended in a hearing that an IME declared Jeffords only moderately disabled, she requested a copy of the report. Two surfaced. Both, dated the same day and written by the same doctor, were identical until the last page; one called her disability "total" and one classified it as "moderate." After Jeffords protested to the New York attorney general, her IME said that he had merely altered his opinion. Liberty Mutual, the insurer, claimed to have nothing to do with his change of mind. A judge granted Jeffords benefits, but the insurer delayed payment for another two years.

The maximum workers can collect in lost wages is two-thirds of their salary, up to a cap set by each state. The 1972 National Commission on State Workers' Compensation Laws recommended the cap equal the state's average weekly wage, but more than a quarter-century later, 19 states still don't meet that requirement. Of the 1 percent to 3 percent of injured workers declared totally and permanently disabled, most get only a small portion of their lost earnings. Payments are so small, says Robert Reville, a RAND Institute analyst who conducted a study of partially disabled workers in 1998, that claimants typically receive only 30 percent of their previous income, instead of the 66 percent recommended by the national commission.

"They try to return to work," he says, "but their condition makes it hard for them to earn as much as before or to retain jobs," Reville says.

Even when workers finally do win, their benefits may be cut off if they don't follow an insurer's requirement. John McKay, 48, of Monaca, Pa., was declared permanently and totally disabled after injuring his knee in a 1992 accident. Five years later, even though his condition had deteriorated, his insurer forced him to take a job as a telemarketer or risk losing his benefits. He was able to struggle through the work (he has trouble sitting for any length of time) by taking double the usual amount of painkillers, but eventually quit at his doctor's request. His insurer immediately cut benefits, and it took McKay six months to get them back.

To contest any insurer action, a claimant has to litigate the case through an administrative law judge or state workers' comp court. That's no simple task, because these legal procedures require depositions, sworn testimony and filing fees. Pursuing a case can take years. In 13 states that reported the amount of time it took for a case to receive a judge's opinion, average lag time ranged from 30 days in Michigan to 18 months in Iowa. In California, 43 percent of cases still are open after 3½ years.

If the business community and insurers have their way, these attacks on workers' comp are only the beginning. Medical costs have started rising again, and workers' comp carriers have allowed claims-handling costs to escalate as well. To cover the extra expenses, insurers have begun lobbying for rate increases, and businesses may again be turning to legislatures for help.

*"Workers' Comp: The Shredded Safety Net," was excerpted by Marlys Harris, Consumer Reports associate editor, for America@work, from "Workers' Comp: Falling Down on the Job," published in Consumer Reports, February 2000. ©*

**For information on websites with extensive workers' compensation information, see page 31.**

# Sweet Smell of Success

**N**ew Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson (R) backs the state Supreme Court's 1999 decision to kill collective bargaining for public employees. He also supports legalizing marijuana, inspiring an AFSCME Council 18 campaign in which public employees distributed "Get High on Collective Bargaining" bumper stickers and "Legal-

ize Collective Bargaining" buttons to New Mexico legislators at the start of this year's session.

With the support of unions around the state, Council 18 pressed for a revised collective bargaining law and pointed out the governor's misplaced priorities, says Joseph Chávez, president of Council 18, which represents 8,000 public

# Star-Studded Reading Time

**E**lephants on Mulberry Street. Green eggs and ham. Moose that hatch eggs in trees. And, of course, a cat in the hat.

Screen Actors Guild members are bringing these characters by Theodor Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss, and others to life for children by sharing the magic of books and reading.

Children in five cities—Los Angeles, Phoenix, Minneapolis, Las Vegas and San Francisco—can dial a local phone number 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to hear a recorded children's story read aloud by a SAG member. The recordings are part of "Storyline," a new service of the SAG Foundation's BookPALS (Performing Artists for Literacy in Schools) program.

SAG President William Daniels kicked off the "Storyline" program in February, and in March, the entire cast of "Dharma and Greg" read from Seuss classics in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday. Mitchell Ryan, a "Dharma" star, is president of the SAG Foundation.

For more information, call the SAG Foundation at 323-549-6709. @

**Tall tales:** SAG members "Dharma and Greg" (Thomas Gibson and Jenna Elfman) record books for children, who can access the stories via telephone.

employees. A revised collective bargaining law passed the state Senate 21–12 this year, but the House indefinitely postponed action on the measure.

The upside of the legislature's failure to enact the bill is that it

has spurred union members around the state to get involved in this year's elections, says Chávez. "Now we will be working hard to gain a veto-proof majority" in the state legislature. @

# www.BushFun.com

**Put George Dubya in the**



**Right House!**

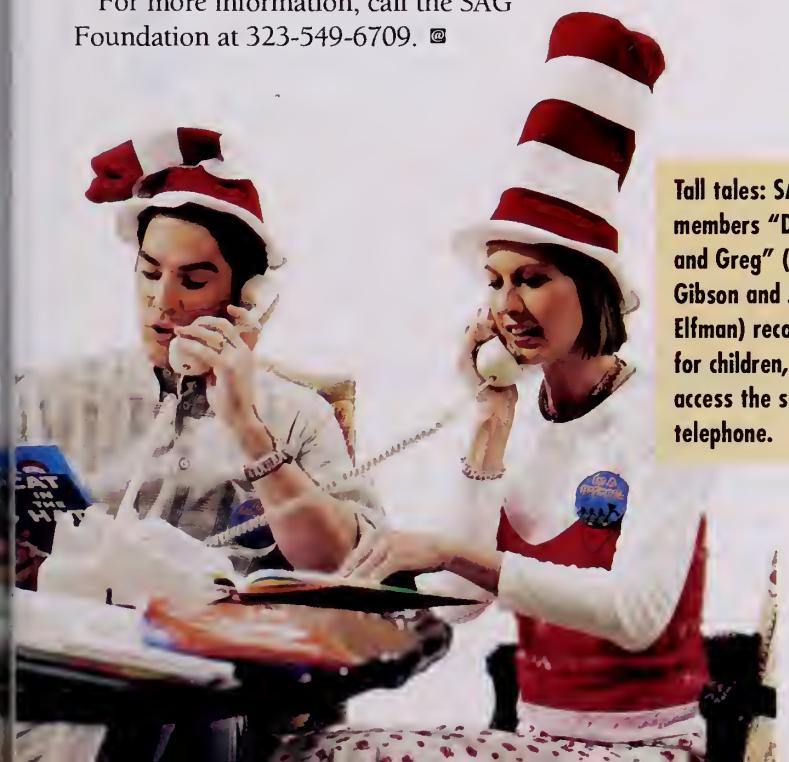
[www.bushcampaignhq.com](http://www.bushcampaignhq.com)

An interactive site in which visitors supply their own news stories, conspiracy theories and letters to the editor. The site includes a link to [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org), where visitors can see who is "dough-nating" to Bush campaigns.

[www.trimnbush2shrub.org](http://www.trimnbush2shrub.org)  
—A site that cuts Bush down to size. (See inset above.)

[www.angelfire.com/me3/DubyaSux](http://www.angelfire.com/me3/DubyaSux)—Highlights reasons why Dubya should become a private citizen, coupled with clever animated artwork, such as a caricature of Bush in motion, "dancing around the issues."

[www.georgebush2000.com](http://www.georgebush2000.com)  
—Proving that reality is more frightening than fiction, this nonparody site shows where Texas under Bush ranks nationally in such areas as the number of children without health care (first) and level of teacher salaries (last). @

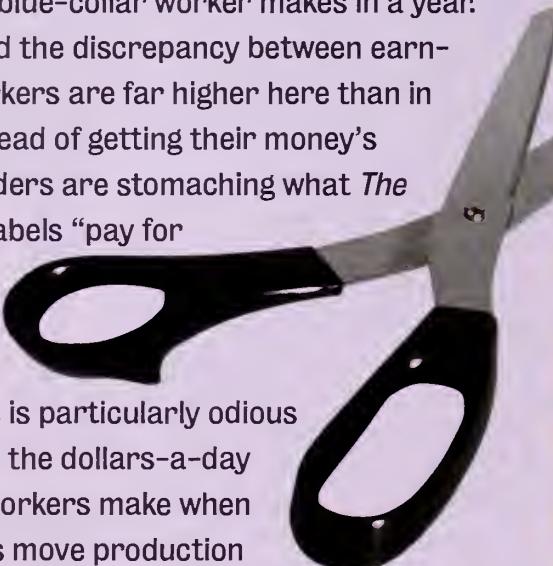


# U.S. CEO Pay

## A GLOBAL OUTRAGE

The average compensation for the CEO of a major corporation hit a whopping \$12.4 million in 1999, according to *Business Week* magazine. That's 475 times more than the \$25,000 the average blue-collar worker makes in a year. Although CEO pay and the discrepancy between earnings of CEOs and workers are far higher here than in other countries, instead of getting their money's worth, U.S. shareholders are stomaching what *The Wall Street Journal* labels "pay for no performance."

Multimillion-dollar pay for CEOs of U.S.-based multinationals is particularly odious when compared with the dollars-a-day pay their overseas workers make when the big-bucks bosses move production from the United States to lower-wage countries.



### What Does GE CEO Jack Welch Have in Common With 15,000 Maquila Workers?



Welch's compensation and stock option package equal the pay of 15,000 workers at GE plants in Mexico.

Sources: GE proxy statement; Associated Press, Dec. 1, 1999; *Business Week*, Dec. 6, 1999

### Are They Really Worth 475 of Us?

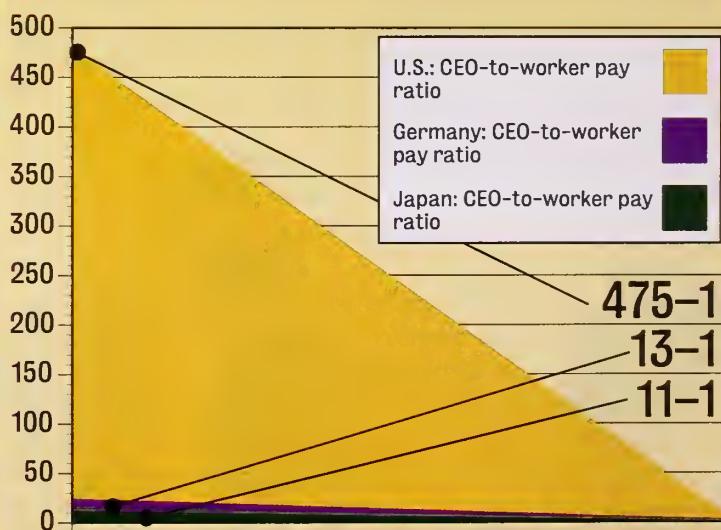
Get more facts about the global unfairness of CEO pay at [www.aflcio.org/paywatch](http://www.aflcio.org/paywatch).



Twenty years ago, CEOs made 42 times the average pay of blue-collar workers. In 1999, they made 475 times as much.

Source: *Business Week*

### CEO Pay in Foreign Countries Pales Compared With U.S. CEO Pay



In today's international economy, workers are told they must compete in a global labor pool—but U.S. CEOs do not seem to face similar competition.

Source: Towers Perrin

## CALENDAR



**Working People: The Art of Ralph Fasanella**, a 2001 calendar available from 1199/SEIU's Bread and Roses Cultural Project, captures the spirit of the workers and the union movement in the colorful style unique to the late Ralph Fasanella. A renowned worker-artist, Fasanella was a union organizer for the unaffiliated United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America in the 1940s before devoting his career to art. \$10.95 plus \$3 for shipping and handling. To order, mail checks payable to 1199/SEIU's Bread and Roses Cultural Project, 7th Floor, 330 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036. For quantity orders, call Bread and Roses at 212-631-4565 or fax 212-695-0538. ☐

## PUBLICATIONS

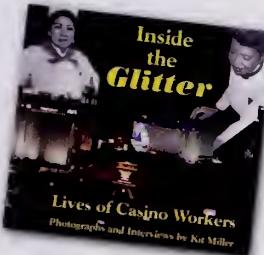
**The Ultimate Field Guide to the U.S. Economy: A Compact and Irreverent Guide to Economic Life in America**, by James Heintz, Nancy Folbre and the Center for Popular Economics, has been updated and expanded in a third edition for the new millennium. The guide, richly illustrated with cartoons and graphs, is a storehouse of facts and figures that give

readers a grip on the mystifying subject of economics. The book covers workers, owners, women, government, health, environment, macroeconomics, the global economy, people of color, welfare and education in 10 chapters that are augmented by an economic

tool kit and glossary. \$16.95. The New Press, 212-629-8812; website: [www.thenewpress.com](http://www.thenewpress.com) or [www.fguide.org](http://www.fguide.org).

**Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered**, by Jack Metzgar, centers on the Steelworkers' 116-day strike against U.S. Steel in 1959 and how union members prevented the steel company from rolling back the clock on the gains Steelworkers had made in the previous 18 years. The book is a tribute to Metzgar's late father, John Metzgar Sr., a Steelworkers griever (shop steward) at U.S. Steel. Metzgar recalls the lessons his father taught him about unionism and how solidarity helped workers gain the health benefits and pensions that afforded his father a modest but comfortable retirement at age 55. Metzgar's vivid, shop-floor perspective underscores the ongoing need for unions to represent workers in the 21st century. \$69.50 cloth; \$22.95 paperback. Temple University Press, 215-204-8787; website: [www.temple.edu/tempress](http://www.temple.edu/tempress).

**Inside the Glitter: Lives of Casino Workers**, by Kit Miller, features the behind-the-scenes workers of Nevada's gaming industry. Miller interviewed and photographed scores of workers over three years before selecting the 40 whose lives and work are detailed in her book. Written in their own words, the stories quash the stereotypes about workers in the service industry and shatter the glitz of the casinos with a brace of reality from workers whose dreams are more modest than the people they serve. \$24.95, plus \$5 shipping. Great Basin Publishing, 775-882-0191; e-mail: [GBNews@aol.com](mailto:GBNews@aol.com); website: [greatbasinweb.com](http://greatbasinweb.com). ☐



## WEBSIGHTINGS

Workers' compensation eligibility requirements and workers' rights vary from state to state. Visit these websites for details:

[www.aflcio.org/safety/comp.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/safety/comp.htm)—Includes a newsletter, a chart listing temporary total disability benefits, comparison of state workers' compensation benefits and downloadable information about state laws on workers' compensation. Click on "links"

to access state workers' compensation agencies and 14 other sites for injured workers.

[www.workerscompensation.com](http://www.workerscompensation.com)—Offers a state-by-state listing that includes links to state statutes and workers' compensation forms. Currently, information is available for 17 of the most populated states, with information for another nine states under construction.

[www.dol.gov/dol/esa/publicregs/statutes/owcp/stwclaw/stwclaw.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/publicregs/statutes/owcp/stwclaw/stwclaw.htm)—The federal government's website provides state-by-state information on workers' comp statutes. ☐

## TRAVEL

**Women union and community activists** can participate in a Spanish-language school delegation to Guatemala July 1–9, 2000. Participants will spend half of each day in the Spanish-language school and half meeting with Guatemalan women and union organizers, including a visit with unionized workers at a banana plantation. The trip is sponsored by STITCH, a network of activists who support the efforts of Central American women to earn a living wage, and by the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala. The cost is \$850, plus airfare. Applications, due June 1, are available from STITCH, 4933 S. Dorchester, Chicago, Ill. 60615; phone 773-924-2738; e-mail [hf52@aol.com](mailto:hf52@aol.com). ☐

## Common Sense Economics

Updated on the Web and Now on CD

Many American workers increasingly are left out of the economic boom: They're working longer hours or at second jobs, facing layoffs, pay cuts or job loss with health care and other benefits threatened. The newly updated AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics website gives an overview of the U.S. economy from workers' perspectives and shows how economic issues are connected to unions' organizing, bargaining, legislative and political action goals. Visit the site at [www.aflcio.org/cse/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/cse/index.htm).



The AFL-CIO's popular Common Sense Economics training program now is available on CD-ROM for union meetings or workshops.

For more information about purchasing the CD, contact the AFL-CIO Education Department at 202-637-5142. ☐



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- ★ Access financial services, including union-sponsored values on auto financing, insurance and home mortgages.

**Get connected! Call 800-806-2150 to order your free start-up disk to connect to the Internet.**

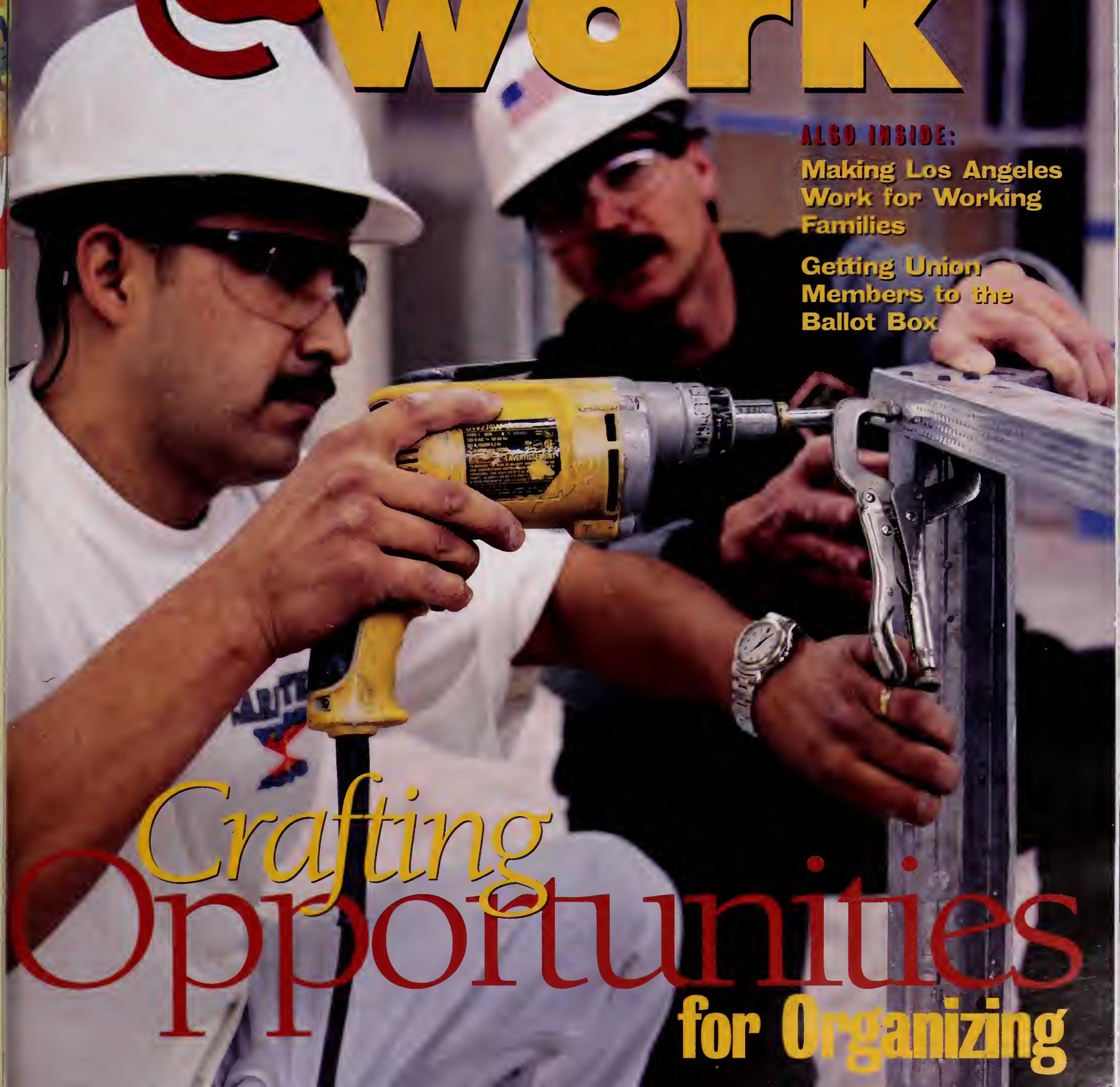
**workingfamilies.com**

# America at Work

ALSO INSIDE:

**Making Los Angeles Work for Working Families**

**Getting Union Members to the Ballot Box**



*Crafting Opportunities for Organizing*

## IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"THE ERGONOMICS ARTICLE that appeared in a recent issue of America@work [March 2000] was a legitimate piece of valuable information, well worth saving for future reference. Repetitive strain injury is an umbrella term for a number of overuse injuries affecting the body's soft tissues, such as muscles, tendons and nerves of the neck, upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms and legs. Typically arising as aches and pains, these injuries can progress to become crippling disorders that prevent sufferers from working or leading normal lives. No employee should go home, after a day's work, suffering from a repetitive strain injury."—Niles F. Bell, UAW Local 1981, Minoa, N.Y.

"I READ WITH INTEREST your article in the March 2000 issue concerning ergonomics issues in the workplace. I would like to bring to light the very real threat of vision impairment in the workplace....Workers dealing with chemicals, dangerous tools or even spending considerable time in front of a computer monitor frequently are left without proper eye protection, i.e., goggles or UV-protective screens. While not a repetitive injury, eye damage can over time have a drastic effect on the vision and health of an employee [and] inhibit safety on the job. I urge the AFL-CIO to consider including this very important safety standard into its commendable fight for ergonomics standards in the American workplace."—Kathleen O'Hara, Cornell University student, Valley Stream, N.Y.

"IT'S ABOUT TIME" something like the New Alliance was created, a forum in which union leaders meet to discuss the rapidly changing environment of the labor force and devise strategies together to improve things. This should open the lines of communications between all levels of unions...[and] can only serve to increase thought, innovation and compromise between unions. I hope to hear about New Alliance meetings in the future."—Jose Sarduy, student, industrial & labor relations, State University of New York, Old Westbury, N.Y.

America  
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June 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 6

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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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**ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS REACHING OUT TO YOUNG ACTIVISTS:**

"Many of our new hires at Republic Technologies Inc. are young (18-34). Most initially think they owe the company for the great working conditions and other benefits. We educate and activate by engaging them in our rapid response network on legislative issues that affect them. We have bulletin board postings just for young members and a new-hire orientation program. I'm under 30, a product of reach-out by the union leadership, and I'm the chief grievance committeeman. My own involvement in the union helps bring others of my generation into activism. We talk grievance committeeman, USWA Local 2603, Lackawanna, N.Y."

"I JUST WANTED TO SAY that as a member of Laborers Local 942 and the Alaska state legislature, I have found your publication interesting, insightful and much appreciated. The rank-and-file membership of all union groups needs linkage between their brothers and sisters; your magazine does that. Good luck in the future and keep spreading the word."—Rep. Tom Brice, District 30, Alaska State Legislature

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Linda Chavez-Thompson, Executive Vice President

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Union activists are countering Big Business's big bucks by registering and mobilizing union members



# No Commercial Breaks for SAG/AFTRA Strike

When the 130,000 members of the Screen Actors and Radio and Television Artists launched a strike May 1 to protest pay cuts proposed by the nation's advertisers, they acted from a new awareness that they face the same kind of employer greed as workers everywhere, union leaders say.



First, this message: SAG and AFTRA members in Los Angeles protest advertisers' efforts to roll back wages.

"The advertisers are asking for a huge rollback while they are making all kinds of money," says AFTRA President Shelby Scott. Most actors earn only

\$8,000 a year, far below the poverty line, but "face the same problems that iron workers and autoworkers face—supporting families and paying mortgages," Scott says.

Actors currently are paid each time an ad runs on network television, but advertisers want to make the network wage scale similar to that of cable television, in which actors receive a one-time fee for a network ad, no matter how many times it runs. For cable ads, actors receive a maximum of \$1,400 for an entire 13-week run, Scott says.

The solidarity of other unions and the AFL-CIO has "helped those who forgot they are part of the union movement to remember that they are union members," says AFL-CIO Vice President Sumi Haru, SAG first vice president. "Actors are workers and we're not going to work for nothing." ☐

## Cardinal O'Connor: Friend of Workers

When officials at Mercy Community Hospital, a Catholic facility in Port Jervis, N.Y., threatened to replace striking nurses in 1994, Cardinal John O'Connor promised the strikers they would not lose their jobs.

Standing up for workers was typical of O'Connor, who died May 3 at age 80. A Philadelphia native, O'Connor grew up in a union household as the son of a painter.

"His insistence that labor be honored in all the dealings of



In remembrance:  
Cardinal John  
O'Connor, 1920-  
2000.

the New York Archdiocese reflected the values he learned as a child," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

O'Connor was a Navy chaplain, rising to Navy chief of chaplains with a rank of rear admiral. He was appointed archbishop of New York in 1984.



## Nike On the Run?

When the powerful CEO of a huge multinational corporation picks up his sweatshop-made shoes and goes home in a snit, it's a good indication of how influential the student and union anti-sweatshop movement is becoming. Nike CEO Phil Knight recently canceled his planned \$30 million gift to his alma mater, the University of Oregon, after the administration, at the urging of student activists, joined the Worker Rights Consortium. Knight supports the corporate-backed Fair Labor Association, which

As leader of the nation's largest Catholic community, O'Connor often spoke out in support of living wages, family-supportive benefits, safe workplaces and respect at work.

So strong was his commitment to workers, says the Most Rev. Rembert Weakland, archbishop of Milwaukee, that when talking with Pope John Paul II about his successor, O'Connor told the pontiff there were only two requirements for the man who replaces him: "First, he has to be Catholic. Second, he has to be a union man." ☐

Stepping out: More than 100 members of the United Students Against Sweatshops unfurled a banner at the Niketown store in New York City in April, protesting Nike's sweatshop labor.

unions and students regard as too weak to adequately monitor sweatshops—preferring instead the WRC, which is committed to strong, independent monitoring. Nike also won't renew its licensing agreement with the University of Michigan or its contract to provide sports equipment to Brown University's ice hockey teams—a move that followed student-led demands for strong human and workers' rights policies.

According to a new report from the National Labor Committee, "Made in China: The Role of U.S. Companies in Denying Human and Worker Rights" ([www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org)), Nike uses 50 factories in China, paying workers about 20 cents an hour. NLC says the cost of living in China is five times greater than what U.S. companies pay their workers there. The report says "workers locked in factories in China producing goods for the largest and most profitable U.S. multinational companies are barely able to eke out an existence, living hand to mouth and surviving only because they are crowded into tiny dorm rooms with 12 other people and eating three dismal company meals a day."

"As students, we can use our purchasing power to make social change," says Laura Close, a University of Oregon student active in the coalition building and demonstrations outside administrators' offices that led to the university's decision to join the WRC. "Students are seeing the corporatization of education, and we are calling for corporate accountability to the workers." ☐



Quality education: AFT President Sandra Feldman stands behind strong teacher preparation.

## AFT Urges Rigorous Teacher Preparation

In the union's latest effort to improve education, AFT is calling for more rigorous standards and preparation for new teachers. The union's report, "Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction," released April 14, calls for rigorous national tests for college students entering teacher education programs and for those seeking teaching licenses.

"At the very time that we are trying to raise academic standards for students, we cannot allow standards for teachers to remain static or to slip," says AFT President Sandra Feldman.

Right now, states give their own licensing tests, and many set a low bar for passage. The union also seeks to raise the grade point average required for college students entering teacher training programs and

require them to take tougher liberal arts and science courses. AFT wants to add a classroom internship as the final year of teacher education.

The report calls for replicating such programs as the Cincinnati Initiative for Teacher Education, with its strong curriculum, high standards and yearlong student teaching internship, in which novice teachers learn from veterans. "The beautiful aspect of this is that everybody learns, even the experienced teachers who are exposed to new ways of doing things," says Cincinnati Federation of Teachers member Sue Taylor, a professional practice school coordinator at the Hughes Center, an inner-city high school.

The full report is available at [www.aft.org/higher\\_ed/reports/k16report.html](http://www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/k16report.html). ☐

## Demanding Justice at Overnite

Demanding justice at Overnite Transportation, striking Teamsters rally in Orlando, Fla., one of dozens of actions union members have waged during the seven-month unfair labor practice strike. The strike, involving 1,800 workers around the nation, has cost the company more than \$100 million, the union says. The National Labor Relations Board has set a June 19 hearing on the union's charges that Overnite executives developed "hit lists" of union supporters, who were fired illegally for infractions fabricated by the company. The board already has found that Overnite violated federal labor laws through unlawful harassment, surveillance and firings and has fined Overnite millions of dollars for illegal actions. Teamsters members went on strike Oct. 24; the company's unfair labor practices have denied them a fair contract since 1994. ☐

## SPOTLIGHT

### 7 Days in June

When nurses at Health Midwest in Kansas City, Mo., tried to distribute union leaflets in the lunchroom, they were escorted out by armed guards, according to charges the AFT filed with the National Labor Relations Board. Delta Air Lines flight attendants, seeking a voice at work with the Flight Attendants, say the company has bumped passengers from planes to ferry workers to anti-union meetings.

Stories like these are common when workers try to gain a voice on the job by forming unions. Some 80 percent of employers hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns, and half threaten to shut down if employees join together in a union, according to Kate Bronfenbrenner, a professor at Cornell University.

But when unions enlist the support of community allies, they can shine a spotlight on employers' attempts to thwart workers' efforts to gain a voice at work. Unions nationwide are taking part this month in *7 Days in June*, a week of hearings, marches and rallies highlighting the obstacles working people face when they try to join unions. More than 100 events were scheduled for June 10-17.

"These activities help us get out the message that workers need unions and many employers fight workers' efforts to improve their lives," says Richard Shaw, secretary-treasurer of the Harris County Central Labor Council in Houston. The labor council is rolling out its "Justice Bus" to tour worksites where workers are seeking a voice on the job. In 1998, the Justice Bus visited workers at Union Tank Car who were on the verge of voting to join the Steelworkers. Today, those workers have a strong union contract.

Some of the activities planned this year include a town hall meeting sponsored by four central labor councils from eastern Iowa and the state federation, in which elected leaders and clergy will hear testimony from workers organizing with Teamsters Local 238 and Food and Commercial Workers at Wal-Mart. Building and construction trades members from New York to Santa Clara, Calif., will gear up their campaign to get temporary workers a permanent voice at work by collecting signatures for petitions for fair community standards.

Look for complete coverage in the July *America@work*. ☐



Spotlighted: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joins supporters of Delta flight attendants.

# Executive Council Calls for Campaign Finance Reform, Retired Americans Alliance

Reiterating its call for reform of the federal campaign finance system, the AFL-CIO Executive Council unanimously supported a policy statement calling for public funding of congressional and presidential campaigns and a ban on unregulated "soft money" funds.

Meeting in Milwaukee May 3-5, council members also approved a statement establishing the Alliance for Retired Americans Jan. 1, 2001, to provide a new voice for

working people on behalf of retirement security, health care and other crucial issues.

Council members visited with participants in the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, a union-business effort to train workers for high-wage, high-skill jobs, and took part in the annual Union-Industries Show and in a communitywide labor-religion breakfast. They also joined more than 300 union members and supporters in a march on Kramer Industries, where

workers are seeking a first contract after joining Steelworkers Local 1343 last year.

"We are here to tell the company that we are on the side of workers who voted for a union," AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson told the cheering crowd. ☐



BOTH PHOTOS: NICK PARINOS

**Supporting workers:** AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (left) and Steelworkers President George Becker (above), Steelworkers Vice President Leon Lynch, AFGE President Bobby Harnage and Steelworkers Secretary-Treasurer Leo Gerard join union and community members in support of Kramer Industries workers.

## CROWN: MORE DIRTY BUSINESS

Members of PACE International Union joined allies in the environmental movement to protest Crown Petroleum's continued violation of air pollution laws. On May 10, PACE and Texans United Education Fund released "More Dirty Business," a report showing Crown has continued the same pollution violations in Pasadena, Texas, two years after receiving a \$1.05 million fine from the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. Between May 1992 and March 1998, Crown exceeded federal pollution limits for two noxious gases, hydrogen sulfide and sulfur dioxide, for more than 15,000 hours. As a result, Crown released more than 1,000 tons of excess sulfur dioxide into the nearby community, exposing residents to dangerous and overpowering odors.

"Crown is the worst polluter in the most polluted city in the most polluted state," says Joe Drexler, the union's director of special projects.

Crown and many other polluters have made contributions to the presidential campaign of Texas Gov.

George W. Bush, who came up with a "voluntary compliance" program for some of the state's smoke-belching industrial plants—a plan union leaders say clearly isn't working, as witnessed by Crown's ongoing pollution violations. Bush also appoints the members of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. Union members are boycotting Crown gas stations because the company locked out PACE workers in 1996. ☐

ROBERT PHILLIPS/PACE INTERNATIONAL UNION LOCAL 4-227



**Naxius neighbor:** Flames and black smoke coming from a Crown Petroleum plant in Pasadena, Texas, are an indication of company's serious pollution problems, according to PACE International Union.

Workers president, fought to keep the benefit fund sound, told the crowd that he brought a message of solidarity from the unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. "We will not let the promise be broken for 70,000 UMWA retirees and widows. We will stand with you and fight with you and together we will win."

UMWA President Cecil Roberts and other speakers urged Congress to pass legislation to transfer funds from other parts of the federal budget to the benefit fund. The bills are the Coal Accountability and Retired Employee Act for the 21st Century (H.R. 4144 and S. 2584) and the Coal Miners and Widows Health Protection Act of 2000 (S. 2538). ☐



WILLIAM LEE

**Hill action:** Coal miners and their families came to Washington, D.C., to urge Congress to ensure health benefits for union retirees.

## Keeping the Promise

Nearly 70,000 retired Mine Workers and their widows count on a more than half century-old promise by the federal government to provide lifetime health care benefits. And on May 17, more than 12,000 UMWA members and their backers rallied on Capitol Hill in support of legislation that would shore up the UMWA Combined Benefit Fund in the face of a battle by coal operators that threatens the fund's survival.

The coal industry is waging a legal struggle to try and renege on a 1946 agreement—which it signed on to—between President Truman and the union that guaranteed the health benefits. Currently, the UMWA Combined Benefit Fund provides health coverage to recipients whose average age is 78; more than two-thirds of the beneficiaries are widows.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka who, as Mine

# The Write Stuff

Union members swept this year's Pulitzer Prizes, the nation's most prestigious writing and journalism awards.

Washington Post reporter Katherine Boo, a member of The Newspaper

Guild Local 35, a Communications Workers affiliate, has no doubt that having a voice on the job helped her development as an award-winning journalist. "The union makes the newspaper a much safer place to work," says Boo, who won the public service award for her articles on government neglect of the mentally retarded. "For example, if you come out of the hospital, you know you will have a job," says Boo. "I grew up singing from the union songbook," she says, recalling her godmother, who worked as a linesman in Minnesota and whose union, CWA, "helped her break the gender barrier."



MARC ROYCE

**Noteworthy: National Writers Union/UAW Local 1981 member Jhumpa Lahiri was among several union members to win a Pulitzer Prize this year.**

category for a series about AIDS in Africa.

Other TNG members who won Pulitzers include Henry Allen of *The Washington Post* for criticism; Charles Hanley and Martha Mendoza of The Associated Press for investigative reporting; George Dohrmann of the St. Paul (Minn.) *Pioneer Press* for beat reporting; and Carol Guzy and Lucian Perkins of *The Washington Post* for feature photography. Awards to staffs of TNG-represented newspapers went to *The Wall Street Journal* for national reporting; *The Denver Post* for breaking news reporting; and the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* for breaking news photography. ☐

Two members of the National Writers Union, a UAW affiliate, also won Pulitzers. Local 1981 member Jhumpa Lahiri took home a prize for her collection of short stories, "Interpreter of Maladies." And Local 2110 member Mark Schoofs of the *Village Voice* won in the international reporting

## OUT FRONT

**H**ow can we use last month's U.S. House vote on China trade in the war against big money politics?

First, we can demand that during the rest of this session, Congress spend as much energy on the people's business as too many House members spent on corporate business during the China trade debate. If our representatives could make time to pass the China permanent NTR bill, they can find time to pass an education bill that improves schools and learning, to increase the minimum wage, to strengthen Medicare and Social Security and to ensure that high-quality, affordable health care is available to all.

We also can build on our partnerships and momentum to propel our longer term Campaign for Global Fairness. It's amazing that working families came so close to winning enough House votes to stop the measure—despite Big Business's \$12 million corporate lobbying campaign. We showed that the "Seattle coalition" of working men and women, people of faith, environmentalists, students and consumers are in this struggle for the long haul, and together we sent a powerful message that the global economy must work for working families everywhere, not just for multinational corporations.

And especially, we must use the energy this vote has generated to mobilize working families to ensure that George W. Bush will not be our next president, even though his corporate pals can outspend working families' unions by 11-to-1 on politics. Let's remember that if Dick Gephardt and David Bonior—instead of Dennis Hastert and Tom DeLay—had been the House speaker and majority whip, the China deal—which was supported by three-quarters of Republicans and one-third of Democrats—never would have been brought to a vote.

In the coming months, we've got to mount our best effort ever to engage working men and women in judging the complete records of every candidate on issues important to our lives and futures. We'll be angry about the China vote and not easy on our friends who deserted us—but we can't take our eyes from the prize. If we allow disappointment or cynicism to reduce our involvement in politics, we guarantee that Big Business and the rich will own the leaders elected in November.

Meanwhile, we must lay the foundation for creating a new politics that truly serves working Americans. Looking to 2002 and beyond, we have to encourage more progressive candidates in primary races—candidates like Hilda Solis in Los Angeles. Union members chose her in the Democratic primary this year to replace Matthew Martinez because they wanted somebody who would be "a real warrior for working families." We need more warriors!

And finally, we must remember that our strength is us, more than 13 million strong. We might lose a crucial vote, but we won't lose our strength. And by harnessing it, we can reclaim politics—and America—for working families. ☐

## After the House China Vote

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



ANDREW SNOW

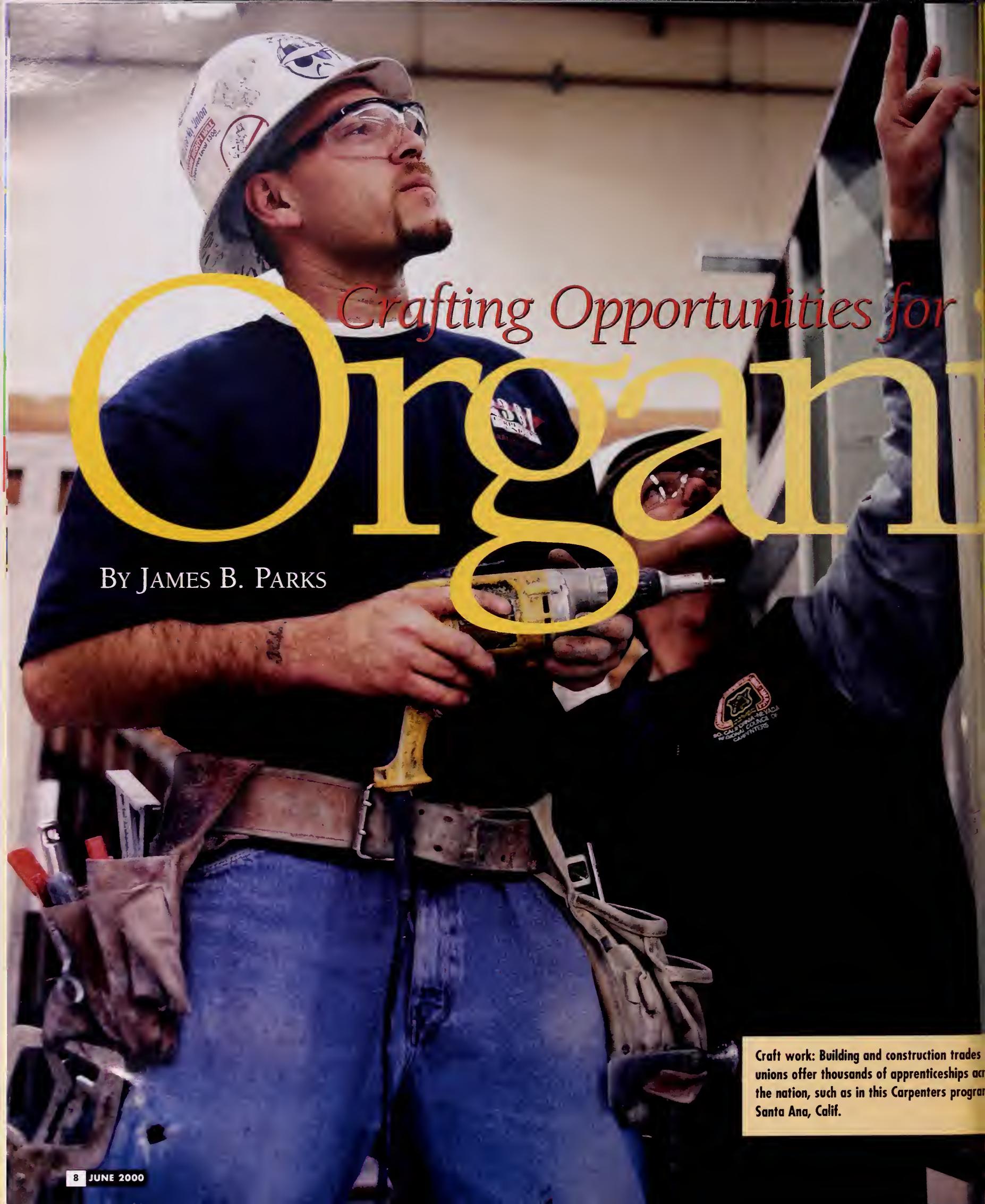
# Working Women Say...

**W**ant to find out what working people are saying about equal pay and work and family issues? Have a suggestion or a question?

Now you can post your comments and read what others have to say on Working Women Say, a featured community of

**workingfamilies.com**

Visit [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) and join the community. ☐



# Crafting Opportunities for Organ

BY JAMES B. PARKS



Craft work: Building and construction trades unions offer thousands of apprenticeships across the nation, such as in this Carpenters program in Santa Ana, Calif.



# zing

Building trades apprenticeship and training programs historically have been run and funded by unions and management to enable workers to receive free, high-quality, comprehensive training that leads to certification in a craft. Employers know that workers who have taken part in these apprenticeship programs are highly skilled employees, making it easier for employees to move from one jobsite to another or from one employer to another after a job is done.

Over the past decade, an across-the-board building boom has created an acute shortage of skilled construction workers. Every day, jobs are opening up faster than workers can fill them, a trend that shows no signs of slowing. To meet future demand, potentially hundreds of thousands of new craft workers will be needed each year, according to a 1998 study by the Construction Labor Research Council.

As the 15 AFL-CIO building and construction trades unions expand their apprenticeship and training programs to keep up with the demand for skilled workers, they also recognize—and are acting on—an unpar-



**Edward Sullivan,  
president, AFL-CIO BCTD:**  
"Hundreds of thousands  
of unrepresented  
workers would benefit  
from apprenticeship  
training."

leled chance to boost membership by reaching out to nonunion workers.

"There are literally hundreds of thousands of unrepresented workers who need and deserve union membership and representation, and who would benefit enormously from our joint apprenticeship and training system," says Edward Sullivan, president of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. "It is essential that we reach out to these workers and recruit many of them directly into our training programs. Our apprenticeship programs have a vital role to play in our organizing activities, and they themselves will

Building and construction trades apprenticeship and training programs help reach out to nonunion workers



JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

**Empowered:** Seattle-area building and construction trades unions are reaching out to women like Mary Vega-Stapleton, who will complete an apprenticeship program in August.



benefit from the infusion of newly organized workers who already are connected and committed to our industry."

"The next five years will define the future of the union movement," says Laborers President Terence O'Sullivan. "Booming conditions in the construction industry give us a golden opportunity to spend more on organizing and grow our market share."

"In the economy of the future, the skills of individual workers in every industry will be paramount to success. Current economic conditions validate our tradition of training and underscore why we must continually push forward in this area," says Electrical Workers President John Barry.

Unions represent about 20 percent of building and construction workers, and there are nearly 4 million unrepresented workers in the industry, many of whom have not had the training needed to become skilled journeymen. Their participation in union-sponsored apprenticeship programs is a way of introducing the union and its benefits. Unions committed to organizing this vast workforce will have to expand dramatically their training capacity to upgrade the skill levels of newly unionized workers.

"The issue is whether apprenticeships are used only to train new entrants into the industry, or whether we use apprenticeships as one of the tools to reach out to those workers who are unrepresented and convince them to join a union," says Jeff Grabelsky, organizing director for the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. Unions that want to organize new members through expanded training need

to make some clear changes in the ways they recruit apprentices, he says.

*Here are six steps to helping new members organize through apprenticeship programs:*



**John Barry, president, IBEW: "Economic conditions show why we must push forward with training."**

**1 Accept applications for apprenticeships year-round.** Some unions recruit new apprentices only once a year, which limits organizers' options. "If a good person is recruited in June, but you only hold interviews for apprenticeships in February, then that person has to wait almost a year before getting a shot at becoming a union member. It's better to be able to evaluate that person right then," says Ron Burke, IBEW director of construction organizing. After switching to year-round apprenticeship recruiting two years ago, IBEW now has 42,000 apprentices, the largest number in the union's history, says A.J. Pearson, director of the union's National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee. "Year-round recruiting made a lot of sense. The industry needs apprentices year-round, so we modified our standards and some of our contract language" to allow apprentices to be selected whenever they are needed, he says. "If we're going to train craftsmen, we need to have apprentices today," Pearson says.

**2 Provide training options to upgrade skills.** Many workers don't need full apprenticeship training, but do need more opportunities to improve skills, Grabelsky says. For example, some IBEW locals hold electrical upgrade classes which bring many workers, including nonunion workers, in contact with the union, Burke says. While private companies provide the same training

**Outreach: In Las Vegas, the Carpenters combines apprenticeship training with outreach to the Latino community, including English-as-a-second-language classes.**

for more than \$100 and require the worker to take a day off from the job, the IBEW holds classes on nonworkdays and the workers split the cost of the class equally, usually about \$50 each, Burke says. "That shows one of the benefits of acting together, of being in a union." At the same time, union journeymen, who are required to upgrade their skills periodically, attend the same classes. The blending of new and more experienced workers facilitates discussions about the benefits of joining a union.

Increasingly, apprenticeship programs also are partnering with colleges and universities that give college credit for apprenticeship training. Affiliates of the BCTD are working with the National Labor College at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies to establish certification for apprenticeship instructors and college credit for apprentices participating in the unions' nationally approved apprenticeship programs. Under these arrangements, apprentices will be able to dually enroll in apprenticeship and college, and simultaneously receive their apprenticeship completion certificates and college degrees.

**3 Consider prior experience in the industry when accepting workers for training.** The Carpenters gives nonunion workers up to

two years' credit, half the length of the apprenticeship training, based on previous work-related experience, says Mark Erlich, senior assistant administrator of the UBC New England Regional Council.

**4 Reach out in new, creative ways to recruit nonunion workers.**

The Sheet Metal Workers began a "youth-to-youth" program 14 years ago, in which young apprentices take a six-month leave from training to get a job at nonunion sites, where they tell other young workers about the benefits of joining the union.

Apprentices begin organizing after taking part in quarterly meetings with union representatives who teach them about union history, political action, labor law and organizing. The longest-running program is at Local 20 in Indianapolis, which Michael Sullivan headed before he became SMWIA general president.

"Our youth-to-youth program



AFL-CIO FILE PHOTO

**Michael Sullivan, president, SMWIA: "youth-to-youth program has proven organizing can be expanded."**

has proven organizing can be expanded significantly by using the energy and talents of our newest members," Sullivan says. "If the union movement is to increase its share of work hours throughout this nation, every available resource must be utilized to monitor the practices of nonunion employers and to organize the unorganized." The youth-to-youth program has enabled Local 20 to double its membership since 1988, to 6,000, says Mike Van Gordon, Local 20 organizer.

Steve Harris began "salting" nonunion contractors in 1998 for Local 20 as part of the youth-to-youth program. Today, he continues salting, working for the past year at nonunion Edwards Electrical and Mechanical and as a Local 20 organizer. "A lot of these guys have never been involved in a union and don't know anybody who belongs to one, so all they hear is the bad things the owner puts out about unions," he says. "But when I show them my wage scale and the benefits, they are amazed. When they see how hard I work—they've been fed that old line about how all union workers do is sit around—they start to realize that what they've been told is not true."

So far, "quite a few" electricians, fitters and sheet metal workers at Edwards have joined the appropriate union, Harris says, mainly because of the wages and the training the unions offer. Harris, who is married with a 5-year-old daughter, says the nonunion workers also like the security of a steady income to feed their families. "They like the fact that if anything happened to the company, they can go to another company and make the same without having to negotiate a new wage."

**Emphasize the benefits of union membership.** Unions must spread the word about their accomplishments in the workplace, especially in achieving job security and health and safety, says Iron Workers President Jake West. "Union workers learn the skills necessary to have a long career. The nonunion companies train workers just for one skill. When that part of the job is over, you don't have any more work. With a union, you're fully trained for a number of jobs."

The Iron Workers reach out to nonunion workers and new groups and evaluate the skills of those interested in joining a union. Each person who joins is placed in the appropriate level in the training program. If workers have journey-level skills, they come in as journeyworkers, but most need training to reach that level, Iron Workers Vice



"The next five years will define the future of the union movement," says Laborers President Terence O'Sullivan (right).

President Ray Robertson says. But even as apprentices, they earn more than they would on a nonunion job.

**6** *Expand the recruiting process to reach out to women and people of color.* The Carpenters combines training with outreach to the Latino community in Nevada through free, 12-week, English-as-a-second-language classes. "We spread the word among the nonunion carpenters and they bring their families," says Bill Howard, coordinator of UBC's Southern Nevada Regional Training Center.

The classes build rapport with the Latino community, and many of the workers in the classes enter the apprenticeship program and join the union, Howard says.

"The Hispanic labor force is working now with nonunion companies, so joining a union benefits them and us," says Dudley Light, the union's director of apprenticeship and training. "They are the labor force of the future, and we have to find ways to get them involved."

In Seattle, building and construction trades unions are trying ANEW (Apprenticeships and Non-traditional Employment for Women) approach. Created in 1994, ANEW is part of the Apprenticeship Opportunities Project, a coalition of unions, community groups and local governments in the Puget Sound area that seeks to expand job opportunities and training in the building and construction trades for women and minorities.

With the support and assistance of community and political leaders, the AOP secured port, city and county ordinances that require apprentice participation in 15 percent of the hours worked on projects costing more

than \$1 million, says Jack Gilchrist, former executive secretary of the Seattle-King County Building Trades Council. The unions also signed a memorandum of understanding with developers and the University of Washington that requires similar apprentice participation in building projects.

So far, the AOP has placed 420 men and women in 28 apprenticeship programs and 152 participants in good jobs in the trades.

For Mary Vega-Stapleton, the most important part of being an apprentice is the respect she receives from her co-workers and family. "It's nice to be respected by your peers," says the married mother of four daughters.

In August, Vega-Stapleton, 39, will complete a five-year apprenticeship for sprinkler fitting with Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 699 in the Seattle area. She became interested in the apprenticeship when she saw a flier for ANEW on the wall at a local laundromat. At the time, she was laid off from her job as a data entry clerk with a local department store. "I wanted to do something different. I wanted to be paid for my skills."



**Jake West, president, Iron Workers:** "With a union, you're fully trained for numerous jobs."

heritage, she says, she was "so proud the day I walked into the union hall."

Having a union job has given her a new sense of pride and power. "I have a skill that I can take anywhere and be supported by my peers. I know I can support my children and I know I have a future. I feel empowered and proud." @

# Women's W O R K

**T**he next time you get dressed in the morning, take a look at the shirt you're putting on. Before it was displayed on a rack at the department store, the shirt may have begun as a cotton plant growing in an impoverished country such as El Salvador, where workers earn only a few dollars a day pulling the plants out of the pesticide-soaked ground. A trading conglomerate then transported the cotton to a mill in South Carolina or Nicaragua or Bangladesh. Once spun into cloth, the cotton was sent to hot, overcrowded garment factories in Haiti or Honduras or China.\*

The shirt may have been sewn by a woman like Sonia Beatriz Lara Campos. The 23-year-old worked at Doall Enterprises in El Salvador as an inspector in a garment factory that sewed clothes for such top fashion labels as Liz Claiborne and Perry Ellis. The 12-hour workdays were long, she told a National Labor Committee meeting in October—and became even longer when mandatory evening and weekend hours were added. Her manager "would say to us that we should work until we died." The company would sign up the women for health care, but wouldn't let them go to doctors' appointments. But managers never hesitated to administer pregnancy tests to new employees to ensure they would not have to pay maternity benefits. Campos said when the women didn't work fast enough, managers "would hit us, throwing pieces of clothing at us." The manager hit her three times. For 60 cents an hour, Campos and her co-workers made the shirts that are shipped to stores in the United States.

\*Institute for Policy Studies, *The Journey of the Blouse: A Global Assembly Line*. The report was the basis for the Sweet Honey in the Rock song, "Are My Hands Clean?"

UNION MEMBERS  
AND THEIR ALLIES  
ARE TAKING ACTION  
TO HIGHLIGHT HOW  
MULTINATIONAL  
CORPORATIONS  
ABUSE AND TAKE  
ADVANTAGE OF  
WOMEN, THE  
WORLD'S POOREST  
CITIZENS

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

ERICA LANSNER/BLACK STAR



Impoverished: Women make up the vast majority of the world's poorest citizens, working in such low-wage jobs as the Mickey Mouse products factory in Shenzhen, China.



CARA USE METZ

Around the world, women are uniquely vulnerable to workplace discrimination, repression, sexual harassment and abuse. While women make up 45 percent of the world's workforce, they constitute 70 percent of the 1 billion poorest citizens, those who live on

less than \$1 a day, according to reports by the International Labor Organization. Employers exploit millions of women in Central America and across the world—including the United States.

As a women's rights activist for the Feminist Majority, Olivia Green visited a New York City clothing sweatshop with a primarily female workforce. There, she says she witnessed the "dirt- and grease-smeared floors" of a 20-story poorly ventilated building with an ever-present "sweaty, musty smell in the air." Each worker's shift was 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., with a half-hour lunch and one 10-minute break, seven days a week. Two young boys, 8 and 10, were standing next to a towering pile of

## Here's How You Can Get Involved

- Take part in the World March of Women 2000. For more information, visit [www.worldmarch.org](http://www.worldmarch.org) or call the National Organization for Women at 202-628-8669 (extension 0).
- Send a postcard calling for an end to poverty and violence against women to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Postcards are available from the Coalition of Labor Union Women, 1126 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-466-4610; and the AFL-CIO Working Women's Dept., 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, 202-637-5064.
- Get the facts about working women in the new AFL-CIO brochure, "Workers' Rights Are Women's Rights," by calling 202-637-5042 in Washington, D.C., or toll-free at 800-442-5645.
- Discuss issues of concern to women everywhere in the Working Women Say community at [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com).
- Learn more about the issues involving PetroChina at [www.petrochinawatch.com](http://www.petrochinawatch.com).
- Find out about women's issues in the global economy by visiting the following websites: The AFL-CIO Working Women's Department at [www.aflcio.org/women/workers\\_rights.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/women/workers_rights.htm); the National Labor Committee, [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org); the Center of Concern, [www.igc.org/coc](http://www.igc.org/coc); Women's EDGE, [www.womensedge.org](http://www.womensedge.org); the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, [www.icftu.org](http://www.icftu.org); Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org); the International Labor Organization, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org); and Women Watch United Nations, [www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch). ☐

sleeves, turning them right side out, one by one. Managers encouraged women to bring their children with them because they could always find work for them to do, Green says. Like many workers employed in such U.S. sweatshops, the women primarily are immigrant workers who came to this country to seek a better life for themselves and their families. "New workers take the place of the old," Green says. "Haitian, Chinese and Central American immigrants have replaced the Slavs, Jews and Italians of a century ago, and still it's women who suffer."

The conditions at the sweatshops in El Salvador and New York are nearly identical—and so are the difficulties women in the two countries face when they seek to gain a voice on the job. For instance, Campos, along with four other workers were fired after they talked to anti-sweatshop activists from Columbia University. When working women and men in the United States try to form unions, at least half of the employers threaten to close the plants, according to Kate Bronfenbrenner, a professor at Cornell University. Often, such threats are sufficient to intimidate U.S. workers and prevent them from fighting for the unions they need to win wages that will enable them to support their families and gain dignity and a voice on the job.

Because it is so easy for corporations to exploit women in developing nations, companies search the globe for countries where workers are not able to win decent wages, family-sustaining benefits and respect on the job.

"Workers across the United States are adversely affected by global assembly lines, as corporations use the threat of cheap imports to push wages down," says an Institute for Policy Studies report examining the chain of production. "Workers everywhere are the losers, because they are played off against one another by the same group of large corporations."

In Elkhart, Ind., German-owned Bayer is closing its plant and moving production to Mexico. Trudy Manderfeld, president of Steel-workers Local 12273, is leading an effort to fight the closure. She even traveled to Germany to meet with her German union counterparts, who also are suffering from Bayer's downsizing in Europe. "We all agreed that it is important to band together globally so companies cannot pit workers against workers," she says.

Some 550 workers are likely to lose their

jobs, including some single mothers. The local union has distributed a mock "help wanted" ad for "American multinational corporations looking to hire qualified individuals in China." The "job description" includes 12-hour work days at 12 cents per hour with no benefits and one bathroom break.

In 1991, many of these same workers in Elkhart took concessions in exchange for a promise from the company to build a second plant in their town, Manderfeld says. Instead, Bayer built the plant in Beijing.

### Taking action

As corporations like Doall Enterprises and Bayer take the low road, working women in every country pay a high price. Increased globalization means that companies can move around—or threaten to move—easily, enabling them to squeeze concessions from workers regardless of the consequences, trapping workers everywhere in a competitive race to the bottom. Companies will operate where they can exploit the most. Because of tradition and family responsibilities, women often are disadvantaged in training and opportunity, so they are more likely to take jobs with low pay and inhumane conditions.

"In the developing world, it is clear that women are being more exploited," says Candice Owley, AFT vice president and head of the union's Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals Division. "They have the lowest wages and are treated as disposable workers, and that pulls down the standards for workers here. It is pulling us

backwards in terms of wages and working conditions." This low-road economic policy, without rules to protect basic rights, doesn't work for working women in the United States or women in the rest of the world.

In response to employer exploitation, women are seeking a voice at work. Last year, two out of three new union members in the United States were women. In countries where unions are prohibited, women are organizing community groups to fight for labor rights. In support of these organizing efforts, women in the United States are offering solidarity and assistance. To highlight how the opportunities and working conditions of women everywhere affect workers in this country, union activists increasingly are mobilizing union members and community allies to improve the working conditions of women workers, recognizing that strong workers' rights here and abroad reinforce each other.

For example, the AFL-CIO, together with the Center for Policy Alternatives and the Ms. Foundation, sponsored a forum on economic empowerment in New York City June 6. Some 500 participants from community and advocacy groups discussed

**Workers' Rights  
are  
Women's Rights**

**Global Fairness:** Union activists joined students, community and religious leaders in a series of April rallies in Washington, D.C., to demand a global economy that works for working families.

women's roles in the global economy and strategies for improving working women's economic status throughout the world.

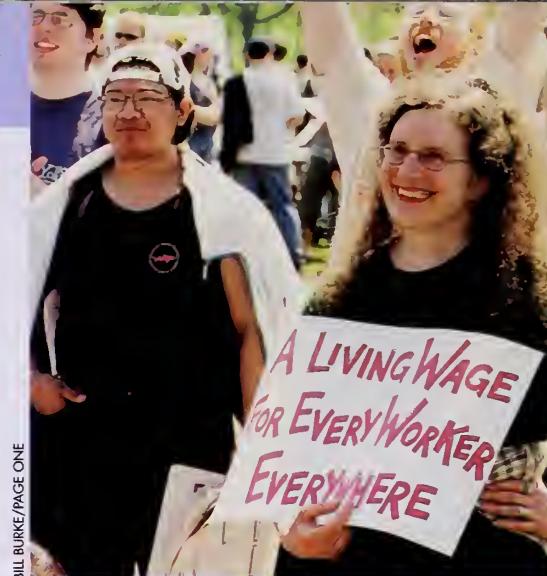
The forum took place during a special session of the United Nations General Assembly marking the five-year anniversary of the 1995 Beijing World Women's Conference. At the special session, participants sought to assess the progress made toward—and ask nations to recommit to—the goals set at the Beijing conference, which included promoting women's economic rights and independence through access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources; facilitating women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade; providing business services, training and access to markets, information and technology; and promoting solutions to the work-and-family dilemmas women and men face.

Unions also are getting involved in the World March of Women 2000. More than 3,000 women's groups in 151 countries are mobilizing to launch worldwide organizing efforts aimed at ending violence against women and poverty. The events, which began on International Women's Day March 8, will culminate Oct. 17, the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, when women representing every participating country will present their demands to the U.N. in New York City. Women also are sending postcards calling for an end to poverty and violence against women to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

In their own communities, union members and their allies are fighting for women workers' rights with a variety of strategies:

- **No-sweat shopping.** Members of the National Council of Jewish Women's New York Section—inspired by UNITE activists they met at a conference on sweatshops—have sponsored two "no-sweat" shopping days. The group sent out pairs of shoppers to trendy clothing stores where they asked salespeople and store managers about where, and under what conditions, garments were made. They left behind bright orange "care tags" that read, "I check the care tag to see how to treat the garments I buy from you. Do you check your manufacturers to see how they treat their workers?"

"Clothes are a very personal thing. You put them on your body," says Barbara Rochman, an NCJW member who took part in



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

a "no-sweat" shopping trip. "If you can have a dialogue with people, you can get them thinking" about exploitative working conditions. Rochman continued her involvement by posting step-by-step instructions for setting up a no-sweat shopping day on the website of the Women's City Club of New York ([www.wccny.org/nosco/action.html](http://www.wccny.org/nosco/action.html)).

- **Wearing uniforms with pride.** Many union members, including police officers, firefighters and restaurant workers, wear uniforms on the job. The Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, along with the city's Jobs with Justice chapter, launched a successful sweat-free uniform campaign after a presentation by unionized Ohio textile workers about workers in developing countries who work for pennies an hour. Union members persuaded the county procurement office and nearly all uniform vendors to agree to provide union-made products. The central labor council sent questionnaires to vendors asking them whether they were a union-preference vendor—one that sells union-made goods when they have a choice between a union-made product and a comparable product made in a sweatshop.

"This is a concrete thing people can do," says John Ryan, the central labor council's executive secretary. "It is real and it makes a difference. This shows the pain of unfair trade and the difference between living in a house and living in a shack."

- **Wielding pension power.** Union members have billions of dollars of their pension fund money invested in a wide variety of

companies. More unions are taking a close look at how those companies treat their workers.

Early this year, the Chinese government, in its first foray into the global financial marketplace, sought to sell shares of the state-owned oil company, PetroChina, to private investors. But it was clear that PetroChina's parent company likely would lay off hundreds of thousands of workers to cut costs, according to the company's own filings, further destabilizing China's already repressed workforce.

Union representatives on pension fund boards made it clear to portfolio managers that they did not want them to buy the stock. As watchdogs for the financial health of members' retirement money, union trustees worried that the stock was a risky investment, partly because stockholders other than the parent company could not have much impact on how the firm was run.

Sandra March, one of three trustees representing union members for the \$45 billion New York City Teachers Retirement System, says U.S. unions have to get more active with workers' rights around the world. "The world is becoming more interconnected," says March, a member of United Federation of Teachers/AFT. "We have to be involved. A worker deserves dignity, respect and decent wages no matter where they live." In the end, many large union pension funds—including the California Public Employees Retirement System, the world's largest public pension fund—refused to invest in PetroChina stock. Goldman Sachs was forced to reduce its initial public offering from \$10 billion to less than \$3 billion.

Union activists are spreading the word that when corporations and governments exploit workers around the world, they drive down wages and working conditions in developing and developed nations. Union members, through their collective voice, hold corporations accountable. When workers organize into unions and have a strong voice on the job, in the economy and in our political system, they are better positioned to press for rules that will make the global economy work for workers.

"The way to help jobs for working women and all workers in this country is by helping people in other countries improve their standard of living because it becomes less attractive for companies to move," says AFT's Owley. "Things we don't allow here we shouldn't allow in other countries." ☐



# Making Los Angeles Work for

FOR JULIE MUÑOZ, the kaleidoscope of T-shirts at a massive rally in downtown Los Angeles March 28 demonstrated the strength of the union movement—city workers in bright kelly green, janitors and teachers in fire-engine red, home care workers in purple.

"It was so exciting," says Muñoz, a part-time recreation assistant for the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. "It was great to see all of the colors of the T-shirts coming together."

On that day, more than 8,000 union members—construction workers and janitors, public employees and actors, hotel employees and bus drivers—joined with community allies to send a unified message to employers and political leaders: Make Los Angeles County work for working families. The unprece-

dented show of solidarity was organized by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor to highlight upcoming contract negotiations for some 300,000 workers. By coming together, workers are demonstrating that no matter how diverse their jobs, their call for improving the lives of working families is the same.

# WORKING FAMILIES

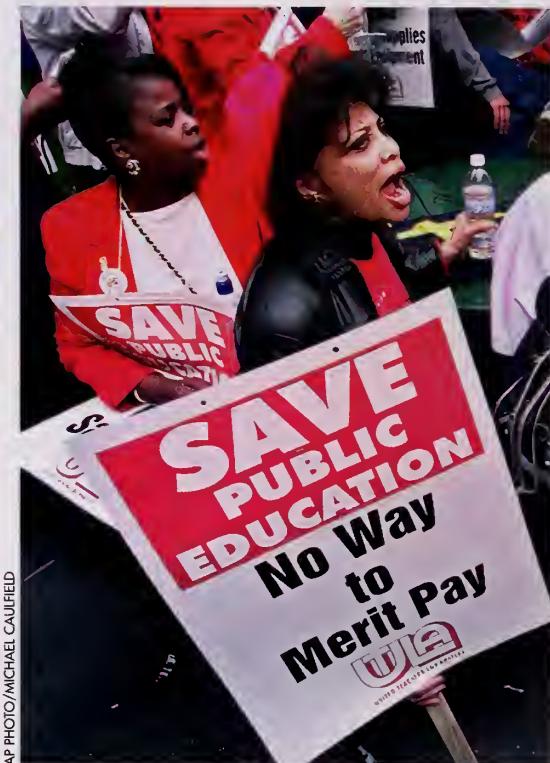
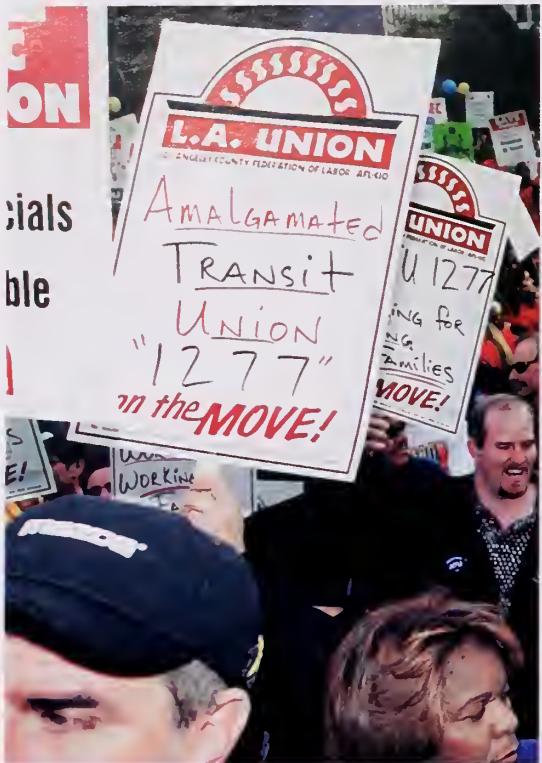
## A Union Cities Success Story

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVIC

There is evidence their message was heard: Thousands of janitors, members of SEIU Local 1877, won a strong contract barely a month after that rally. Their victory came after a three-week strike that involved widespread community support and backing from lawmakers—some of whom, seeking fair wages and working conditions for the workers, participated in negotiations. And on June 5, Muñoz and the park workers won a voice at work with AFSCME.

How the union movement in Los Angeles—a city where barely 10 years ago, the number and strength of unionized workers were declining—spoke in one voice shows the power and potential of building a strong Union City.





For the past several years, union leaders in L.A. have been taking part in the AFL-CIO's Union Cities strategy, a step-by-step plan to strengthen local unions through organizing, building coalitions and mobilizing union voters. In 1999, the number of union members in L.A. grew by 10 percent, in large part through the labor council's commitment of time, energy and resources to organizing—efforts that also included creating an organizing department in 1998. More than two years ago, labor council leaders made a strategic decision to reach out to local unions to better coordinate political and organizing efforts. The labor council began helping affiliates with strategic organizing campaigns, developing and implementing a common political agenda and increasing communication among local unions.

Energized by a new set of clear goals, leaders and activists began building the foundation of a strong, unified local union movement. They created an up-to-date database of activists and crafted a consistent economic message about the county's wealth gap. They shifted from "checkbook" politics to issues mobilization, reached out to religious and community allies and created a mobilization network through phone calls, faxes and worksite fliers. One of the goals set in those early days was to mobilize 1 percent of union members—8,000 people—by 2000. With the March 28 rally, L.A. unions met their goal.

A briefing paper prepared by local union leaders found that L.A. workers are struggling despite the booming economy, as secure, well-paying jobs have been replaced with poverty-wage jobs that offer few, if any, benefits. "L.A. County's much-heralded economic recovery has largely ignored working people," says the report, "Together We Can Make Los Angeles County Work for Working Families." In the public sector, wage freezes, contracting-out, privatization and the proliferation of part-time positions have "left workers scrambling for second and third jobs just to make ends meet," the report says.

"As more than 300,000 workers negotiate for better wages, benefits and working conditions, we will awaken all of Los Angeles to the problems that face this county—the growing wage gap, inadequate health care, the crisis in education, the delivery of quality public services—and how unions, allied with the community, can provide solutions," says Miguel Contreras, executive secretary-treasurer of the labor council.

### Mobilizing 8,000 union members

When Muñoz, one of 2,000 part-time park employees seeking to form a union with AFSCME District Council 36, joined in the March 28 rally, she learned that part-time teacher aides who work for the Los Angeles Unified School District face many of the same issues she and her co-workers deal with, such as difficulties in getting

health coverage. "They are in the same boat we are," Muñoz says.

That message resonates with union members, whether they are sheriff's deputies, teacher aides or construction workers, local leaders say. "What goes on in the community matters to us because it affects the kids we teach," says Mike Cherry, a vice president of United Teachers-Los Angeles, a merged AFT/National Education Association local. He notes that poverty wages and a lack of health benefits for L.A.'s working adults result in hungry, sick and ill-prepared children in L.A.'s schools. "We decided to support each other because we are all in this together," says Cherry, whose union is fighting the school board's substandard-wage offer in contract negotiations this year.

UTLA stewards and chapter chairs, armed with sign-up sheets, postcards and letters, mobilized teachers at 660 schools for the March 28 rally. The union chartered 54 buses but still ran out of space for all the teachers who wanted to attend, so teachers rented their own transportation. In the end, 3,600 teachers took part.

Like the teachers, Screen Actors and Television and Radio Artists also are in contract talks this year. SAG and AFTRA members "recognize that we have far more in common with laborers than with stars on the Oscars," says Todd Amorde, a SAG board member. The actors' unions went on strike in May against advertising agencies, which



SLOBODAN DIMITROV



SLOBODAN DIMITROV



AP PHOTO/MICHAEL CAULFIELD

are seeking to lower the wages actors are paid for radio and television advertisements.

### Getting 300,000 workers ready for negotiations

Working with the L.A. labor council, local union leaders crafted a common goal for upcoming negotiations: a living wage across all industries for all workers. As part of their strategic efforts to get out their message and mobilize union members, the unions created two multiunion steering committees. The communications group formed a speakers' bureau and gave rank-and-file members tips on talking with reporters, and the mobilization committee laid the groundwork months in advance for the March 28 rally.

The solidarity generated by the rally was apparent a few days later, when 8,500 janitors rejected a contract offer that included only a token wage increase. When they went on strike, they were supported by Teamsters Local 396 members, who refused to pick up UPS packages at the expensive downtown office buildings where janitors were picketing, and by members of Elevator Constructors Local 18, who repaired elevators only in emergencies. Painters and Allied Trades District Council 36 and other members of the L.A.-Orange County Building and Construction Trades also honored the picket lines and sent letters of support. When janitors marched eight miles through the city, "every union turned out," says labor council

coordinator Charles Lester, including 100 SAG members who streamed out of their union hall. On April 24, the janitors won a pay raise that boosts wages over three years by 26 percent for janitors downtown and 22 percent for those in the suburbs.

"Janitors knew they did not stand alone in their brave battle," says Mike Garcia, SEIU Local 1877 president. "From UPS drivers to teachers to actors, union brothers and sisters honored janitors' picket lines, and that resulted in building owners and contractors settling a just contract." In turn, the janitors' victory has inspired other unions facing tough bargaining. "Teachers see that the jan-

itors' success will relate to their success," says Cherry. "It creates momentum."

With contract negotiations throughout the summer, a June 24 Solidarity Summer working families celebration, the Democratic National Convention coming to Los Angeles in August and an election for a new mayor next year, Cherry says there are plenty of opportunities for L.A.'s working families to mobilize and get their message out.

"In the past, when your contract was up or you went out on strike, you were basically on your own," he says. "It's different now. Unions have become a real power in Los Angeles." @

**IN THE PAST** three years since the campaign was launched, more than 160 labor councils are on the road to Union City by:

- Supporting local union efforts to shift resources to organizing.
- Mobilizing against anti-union employers through Street Heat action.
- Building political power and community coalitions.
- Promoting progressive economic growth.
- Educating union members in Common Sense Economics.
- Generating support for a voice at work and workers' right to choose a union.
- Diversifying leadership to reflect membership.
- Increasing union membership.

For more information on Union Cities strategies, visit [www.aflcio.org/unioncity/8stepsto.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity/8stepsto.htm). @



# Getting Members to the Ballot Box

CHRIS FARINA

**Union activists are countering Big Business' big bucks by registering and mobilizing union members**

BY MIKE HALL

In April 26 at a black-tie dinner in Washington, D.C., presidential candidate George W. Bush helped raise \$21.3 million for the Republican Party. The audience of fund-raisers included top executives from Blue Cross and Blue Shield, AT&T, United Parcel Service, US West Inc. and hundreds of others who traded their daytime boardroom button-downs for formal evening wear and the chance to contribute up to \$250,000.

Earlier that month in Portland, Ore., state AFL-CIO President Tim Nesbitt and three other volunteers spent two hours one evening knocking on the doors of 125 union members who were not registered to vote—and many of them “signed up on the spot,” Nesbitt says.

The result of those two events—about 100 new union voters vs. \$21.3 million mostly corporate dollars—gets to the heart of what registering union members to vote is all about: people-powered politics vs. Big Business’s big bucks.

Millions of union members and their families are not registered to vote. To make sure working families make their voices heard at

the ballot box this fall, local unions are mobilizing to increase voter registration numbers by 10 percent, and central labor councils and state federations are mounting voter registration drives to make sure working families’ votes counter corporate contributions on Election Day.

In Oregon, well-funded, anti-worker extremists are working for passage of state initiatives patterned after California’s Proposition 226, the so-called paycheck protection measure aimed at silencing working families, which voters rejected in 1998.

Like their anti-worker counterparts on the national level, backers of the Oregon initiatives have a well-funded war chest, says Nesbitt. But working families have some political currency of their own:



“Votes—and they’re not for sale.”

In 1998, 67,245 Oregon union members weren’t registered to vote—and with 3,250 votes, working families could have regained control of the state house.

Union efforts in Oregon, as well as in Kansas and New Jersey, demonstrate how union activists around the country are mobilizing to reach out to unregistered union members and getting newly registered members to vote.

Voter registration at every worksite and event In Kansas, the number of UAW Local 31 members registered to vote soared after the union launched a multipart strategy that took voter registration to worksites and nearly every union function. Dan Fairbanks has been running UAW Local 31’s Community Action Program and voter registration operations for the past three years at the 3,200-worker GM Fairfax plant.

“We had a pretty good registration rate when I took over, about 70 percent. Now it’s close to 90 percent,” he says.

**Registered: As part of a New Jersey State AFL-CIO WORKER/VOTER event, IUE Local 401 registered 746 members in one day.**



A concerted effort to boost registration numbers resulted in the 20-percentage-point increase, Fairbanks says. The local set up tables with voter registration cards and signs at plant gates and obtained a precinct-by-precinct list of registered and unregistered voters through the secretary of state's office, matching those against the local's membership lists. "Then we went down the assembly line with registration cards—that was probably the most effective way," Fairbanks says.

At every local union function, from picnics to monthly meetings, union leaders make registration material available. Fairbanks says he also works with UAW Local 249 in nearby Missouri and with the Tri-County Labor Council of Eastern Kansas "to exchange ideas, materials and information."

#### Statewide mobilization

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is moving its highly successful WORKER/VOTER program into full steam, says state federation Secretary-Treasurer Laurel Brennan. The state federation, working with New Jersey's 13 central labor councils, sponsors voter registration training seminars for local union leaders that provide tips on understanding state election laws, conducting workplace registration and sponsoring community WORKER/VOTER registration days.

"All a local needs to do is give us a call and we'll set up a training session, go through the voter registration form, how to fill it out, how to approach members and motivate them to register. We also stress that the worksite is the best place to conduct a registration drive," Brennan says.

In April, after taking part in WORKER/VOTER training, five New Jersey locals—Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 69; Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union/UFCW Local 108; Amalgamated Transit Union Local 822; PACE International Union Local 2-0438; and IUE Local 455—registered more than 800 union members to vote. Volunteers armed with registration materials fanned out on shop floors talking with co-workers. Local unions also set up tables in lunchrooms to talk with union members on break.

"Since 1999, we've taken WORKER/VOTER to garment shops, auto plants, bus terminals—all kinds of workplaces—and have registered 81,000 new voters," Brennan says.

"As a physician, I am profoundly concerned about our health care system and our current inability to provide basic quality care for all Americans," says Dr. Janice Nelson. "We have 44 million people without health insurance and a system that is expensive, inefficient and oftentimes inaccessible to the people who need it most." Nelson, a member of the Union of American Physicians and Dentists/AFSCME, is running for Congress in California's 28th District, which includes the San Gabriel Valley east of Los Angeles. As a professor at the University of Southern California, Nelson also is a strong proponent of public education and vocational training. "I want citizens to be trained to take the good, high-tech jobs of the future."

Nelson is seeking to unseat incumbent Rep. David Dreier (R). Out of 238 working family votes the 10-term congressman and co-chair of George W. Bush's presidential campaign cast in 1999, he supported working family issues only four times, according to the AFL-CIO lifetime voting record.

Nelson says to counter Dreier's big bucks campaign—by April, he already had raised \$2.7 million—it's critical to mobilize district residents, nearly half of whom are not registered to vote.

"If local union people can put forth the kind of effort that has won other races—the ground troops to register new voters and get out the vote—we can beat Dreier."

To learn more, visit Nelson's website at [www.nelson4congress.com](http://www.nelson4congress.com). ☐

#### One-on-one by phone and on foot

Meanwhile this spring, the Oregon state federation and member unions supplemented their door-to-door efforts with a new automated phone dialing system. Launched in time to register voters for the May 16 primary, the system is made up of 12 phone lines installed at Carpenters Local 247 in Portland and eight lines at Machinists/Woodworkers Local W246. The dialer helps volunteers speed up their calls to union households and also enables nonregistered members to receive voter registration forms immediately by mail. With the push of a button, a phone banker can generate a letter with a voter registration form, a stamped

envelope and postage-paid return envelope before the call is over. Online for only eight days before the election's April 26 registration deadline, volunteers contacted 2,000 unregistered union voters.

When working families vote, when unions mobilize members for people-powered politics, they can neutralize the influence of a \$21.3 million Bush-backed fund-raiser and the other millions of dollars in corporate cash spent to further the interests of Big Business. As New Jersey's Brennan stresses to local unions, "Your contributions and your endorsement of candidates won't work unless your members are registered to vote." ☐

#### Tips for Registering Union Members to Vote

- Visit your local registration office, generally located in the county courthouse, for a copy of current registration laws and registration deadlines.
- Obtain voter registration forms from your county registrar or secretary of state to distribute at worksites or mail to your members.
- From your county registrar or secretary of state, get voter registration lists, usually divided by precinct, so you can match unregistered voters with your membership list.
- Find out if election laws allow voter registration forms to be reproduced with a union's return address so the local can keep track of new registrants.
- Make sure voter registration volunteers always have a supply of registration forms handy to distribute at work, union meetings and other functions.

Your central labor council or state federation can supply you with fliers and other information on why it's important for working families to register to vote.

For more information, including voter registration deadlines and a downloadable National Mail Voter Registration form, visit [http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/reg\\_index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/reg_index.htm). ☐



JIM SIOSIAREK

# Where Will the Next President Stand on Fair Wages?



The booming economy that's making the rich even richer isn't treating regular working folks nearly as well. Many of us have trouble just making ends meet. When we go to the polls this November, we will be casting our votes for a president who will make critical decisions on how well we are able to support our families.

## Minimum Wage

When Congress passed the 1996-1997 minimum-wage increase, those who benefited most were older than 20—not teenagers looking for extra cash. Of those older than 20, 40 percent were the sole breadwinners in their families.

In the U.S. House and Senate, Al Gore, who always has backed raising the minimum wage and who believes that people working 40 hours a week need to be able to support their families, supported increasing it in 1977, 1988 and 1989—the only years it came up when Gore was in Congress. As vice president, Gore pushed for the 1996 minimum-wage increase. Gore also called on Congress to pass minimum-wage increases in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

As Texas governor, George W. Bush opposed increasing and extending the minimum wage three times. Domestic and agricultural workers in Texas are covered by the state minimum wage of \$3.35 an hour. At the federal level, Bush supported an amendment allowing states to refuse coverage by the minimum-wage in a bill that passed the U.S. House of Representatives March 9.

In his book, "A Charge to Keep," Bush says welfare recipients should be required to get jobs, yet he opposes paying the federal minimum wage for their work in public-sector jobs. He argues they should receive only \$188 in monthly Texas welfare payments, which endangers decent, livable wages for other public-sector employees, too. Bush's 12-page "New Prosperity Initiative," which purports to "expand opportunity for working Americans living between poverty and prosperity," does not once mention wages, including the minimum wage.

## Equal Pay

On average, women earn about 73 cents for every dollar men make. As a result, America's working families lose a staggering \$200 billion of income annually to the wage gap—an average loss of more than \$4,000 for each working woman's family every year because of unequal pay.

As part of the fiscal year 2000 budget, President Clinton and Gore called for \$14 million in pay equity efforts, and Gore backs the Paycheck Fairness Act to help working women close the pay gap.

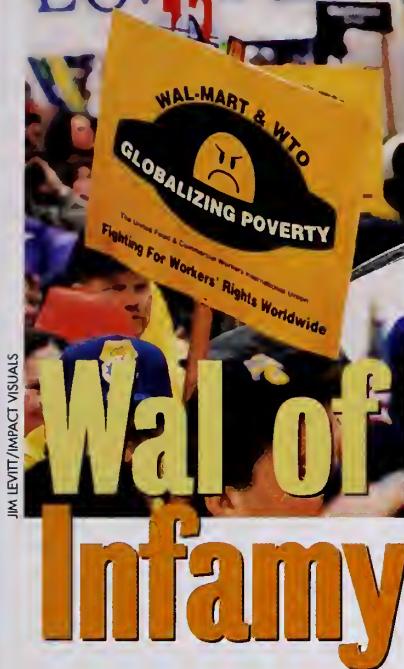
So far, Bush has been silent on the issue of equal pay.

## Fair Wages for Building and Construction Trades Workers

The Davis-Bacon Act was passed in 1931 to prevent the federal government from driving down wages and benefits in local communities, to deny unfair contractors the incentive to undercut local businesses and contractors and to import workers willing to work for less. The act requires contractors to pay prevailing community wages and benefits on federal construction projects costing more than \$2,000. For construction trades workers and their families, Davis-Bacon community-wage standards mean stability, security and a decent standard of living. For communities, they mean a stronger tax base and a healthier economy. And for contractors, community-wage standards mean better-trained workers, higher-quality work, increased productivity and lower turnover.

While in Congress and as vice president, Gore has fought anti-worker attempts to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act and has promised to veto any legislation that undercuts community-wage standards.

Bush opposes Davis-Bacon. ☐



Wal-Mart's anti-worker record now is available to everyone with Internet access on a site that documents the company's lengthy litigation record.

To help lawyers whose clients are suing Wal-Mart, the Wal-Mart Litigation Project site, [www.wal-martlitigation.com](http://www.wal-martlitigation.com), operated by attorney Lewis Laska in Nashville, Tenn., categorizes hundreds of cases Wal-Mart has lost. While most suits involve injuries customers suffered on store property, numerous lawsuits filed by current and former employees involve egregious violations of workers' rights. For instance:

- A San Antonio employee fired after filing a worker's compensation claim won \$630,000 in damages from the company as part of a wrongful termination suit.

- Four employees in Kentucky won \$5 million each when they took a manager to court for setting up a video camera in the employee break room. Court documents showed the manager, hoping to catch a thief with the camera, even provided the "bait"—an open package of nuts and candy.

- A wheelchair-bound worker whose job application was rejected by Wal-Mart six times sued Wal-Mart for Americans with Disabilities Act violations and was awarded more than \$3.5 million. Although the Albuquerque, N.M., store had 133 job openings, according to court documents, the manager had told the job applicant the store had "no openings for a person in a wheelchair."

- A Texas woman was awarded \$60,224 in compensatory and punitive damages in her racial discrimination suit contending she was fired because of interracial dating. According to court testimony, she said her supervisor told her she would "never move up with the company being associated with a black man." ☐

## A Tasty Move

**I**t's big. It's blue. It loves cookies—and justice for workers. It's...Cookie Monster.

Rallying with workers seeking a first contract with Auxiliary Services Corp. at the State University of New York's Cortland campus in April, Cookie Monster urged students and faculty to sign two giant petitions supporting a



**CHEW ON THIS:**  
Cookie Monster turned up the heat on slow-moving contract talks.

MARK KOTZIN

## A Night at the Bread and Roses Café

**A**nyone who has ever sung lyrics from the union folk anthem "Bread and Roses"—"hearts starve as well as bodies, give us bread, but give us roses"—knows that workers need art in their lives as much as decent wages and respect on the job. The Health & Human Service Employees Union 1199/SEIU helps nurture art and artists as part of the union's Bread and Roses cultural project, which for more than 20 years has hosted performances, art exhibits, concerts, fairs and film screenings for members.

In January, Bread and Roses debuted a monthly café at 1199's New York City union hall, enabling members to showcase their talents as singers, musicians, poets and playwrights. Each performance has drawn nearly 100 union members to enjoy union performers, including a nurse who leads a Latina jazz band, a laundry worker who plays conga drums and an X-ray technician who sings the blues.

Retired social worker Elaine Spiro saw the one-act play she penned—coached along by a Bread and Roses writers' workshop—performed at the café last month. Spiro says Bread and Roses helps keep her connected to her union. "I continue going to demonstrations and lobbying in Albany," she says. "The people I meet at the writing workshops tell me how it has enriched their lives and how it has given them the courage to write. I know they feel a lot of loyalty and enthusiasm." ☐

fair contract for workers. Cookie Monster, aka CSEA Local 1000/AFSCME member Renee Farrands, helped deliver the petitions, bearing more

than 2,000 signatures, to SUNY Cortland President Judson Taylor. Taylor pledged to step up negotiations, which union leaders say had made little progress since the 130 workers joined CSEA Local 1000/AFSCME in December.

The union baked up the idea of

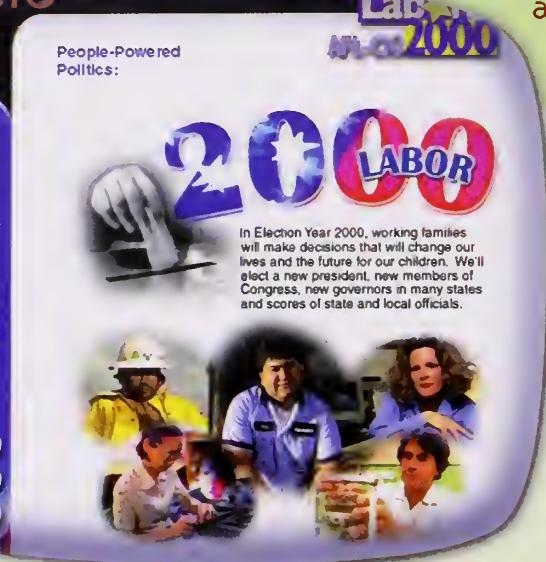
bringing Cookie Monster to its rally after ASC, under contract with the university to operate food services and the campus bookstore, suspended a 33-year employee—and strong union supporter—for eating a cookie on the job, says Bernie Mulligan, special assistant to CSEA President Danny Donohue.

CSEA organizer Will Streeter says the rally and support from the university community had an immediate impact in moving negotiations forward. "We're sure the show of support from the campus had a lot to do with the progress we saw." Or, as Cookie Monster says: "Me want a cookie...and a contract for ASC workers!" ☐



On stage: Union members showcase their talents at the Bread and Roses Café.

**R**egistering union members to vote also means giving them the tools and information they need to take part in the election process. Below are websites that offer background on the issues and the candidates and provide hands-on voter registration.



## [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm)

The AFL-CIO Labor 2000 site details the presidential candidates' positions on working family issues, explains why the federation endorsed Vice President Al Gore as the candidate with the best working families' record and enables union members to e-mail politicians on the issues most important to them. Users can find out how to become a state or national political party delegate and see why union members elected to public office are among the most effective advocates for working families.

**www.voter.com**—This nonpartisan website can be tailored to provide information on a visitor's congressional and local elected officials, along with news on issues selected by the visitor.

**www.1stpolitics.com**—Includes the latest news stories on the presidential candidates. Updated every 15 minutes, the site compiles information from more than 200 sources, and links news headlines to the websites where the stories are located.

**www.govote.com**—Sponsored by the Democratic National Committee, the Republican National Committee and others, this site provides information on candidates running for president and

Congress, an election calendar and presidential candidates' schedules. Includes links to voter resources and political forums.

**www.speakout.com>SelectSmart**—By answering a series of questions, users can find out which candidate's positions are closest to their own. Offers candidate comparisons on the issues and options to e-mail a message to a candidate, participate in a survey or sign a petition.

**www.vote-smart.org**—Project Vote Smart is a virtual library of information on more than 11,000 elected officeholders and candidates. Candidate information includes biographies, campaign finances, issue positions and voting records. Includes links to state information, the status of congressional legislation and ballot issues and online voter registration.

**www.rockthevote.com**—This youth-oriented website includes interactive issue polls, links to online voter registration and information on the Rock the Vote 2000 bus tour aimed at registering voters. ☐

## Politics for kids

Elections aren't just for grown-ups—the outcomes of elections affect children, too. Many fun sites can help kids surfing the Internet learn about the election process. Here are a few.

**www.vote-smart.org/yip**—Check out one of the most informative political sites, with information and games throughout the site's "Youth Inclusion Project" pages.

**www.kidsvotingusa.org**—Visit here to see this group's latest newsletter and learn how to get your school to participate in the Kids Voting program. Click on "Cool Sites" for links to other political pages.

**www.timeforkids.com/TFK/election2000/index.html**—Cast your vote for president of the United States after you find out more about the candidates and the issues. If you don't know all the political terms, click on the "Electoral" ☐

For information on your union's political action, visit the following websites:

AFSCME: [www.afscme.org/2000/index.html](http://www.afscme.org/2000/index.html)  
Amalgamated Transit Union: [www.atu.org/elect2k.html](http://www.atu.org/elect2k.html)

Boilermakers: [www.boilermakers.org/5-LEAP/5-index.html](http://www.boilermakers.org/5-LEAP/5-index.html)

Communications Workers: [www.cwa-legis-pol.org](http://www.cwa-legis-pol.org)

Fire Fighters: [www.iaff.org/iaff/GovAff/html/political\\_action.html](http://www.iaff.org/iaff/GovAff/html/political_action.html)

Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics Workers: [www.gmpiu.org/gmp\\_online/Organizing/Urgent2/urgent2.html](http://www.gmpiu.org/gmp_online/Organizing/Urgent2/urgent2.html)

Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees: [www.hereunion.org/callaction/vote/](http://www.hereunion.org/callaction/vote/)  
Locomotive Engineers: [www.ble.org/pr/journal/](http://www.ble.org/pr/journal/)

Machinists: [www.iamaw.org/political/political.htm](http://www.iamaw.org/political/political.htm)

PACE International Union: [www.pace-union.org/political.html](http://www.pace-union.org/political.html)

Plumbers and Pipe Fitters: [www.ua.org/political/poltest.htm](http://www.ua.org/political/poltest.htm)

SEIU: [www.seiu.org](http://www.seiu.org)

Sheet Metal Workers: [www.smwia.org/html/p\\_a\\_1\\_.html](http://www.smwia.org/html/p_a_1_.html)

Teamsters: [www.teamster.org/governmt/govt.htm](http://www.teamster.org/governmt/govt.htm)

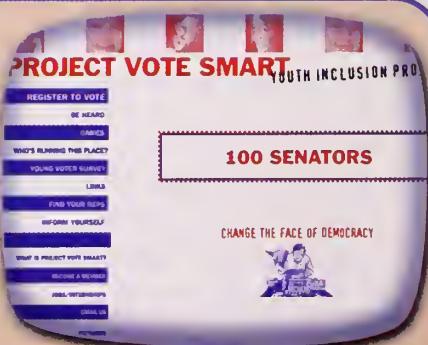
Theatrical Stage Employees: [www.iatse.lm.com/iatsepac.html](http://www.iatse.lm.com/iatsepac.html)

Transport Workers: [www.twu.org/Political/Polit.html](http://www.twu.org/Political/Polit.html)

Transportation • Communications Union: [www.tcunion.org/Legislative%20Affairs.htm](http://www.tcunion.org/Legislative%20Affairs.htm)

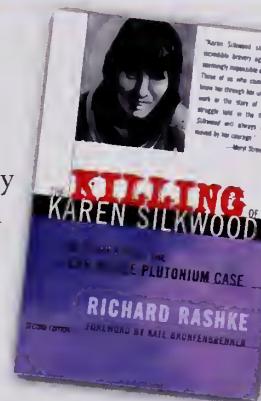
UAW: [www.uaw.org/cap/2000/pol/index.html](http://www.uaw.org/cap/2000/pol/index.html)

UNITE: [www.uniteunion.org/reclaim/reclaim.html](http://www.uniteunion.org/reclaim/reclaim.html) ☐



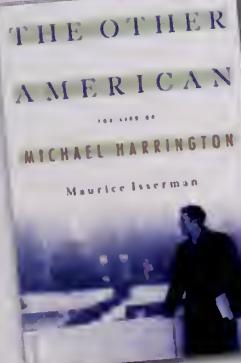
## PUBLICATIONS

**The Killing of Karen Silkwood: The Story Behind the Kerr-McGee Plutonium Case**, by Richard Rashke, with a foreword by Kate Bronfenbrenner, revives for another generation the question surrounding the tragic death of Karen Silkwood, a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (now PACE International Union). Silkwood, a worker at Kerr-McGee's plutonium plant in Crescent, Okla., reportedly was set to expose the company's negligence in losing 42 pounds of plutonium and its hazardous health and safety practices. On her way to meet with a *New York Times* reporter in November 1974, she was killed in a car crash. Kerr-McGee subsequently tried to discredit Silkwood's whistle-blowing efforts. In this second edition of the 1981 book, Rashke adds three chapters, in which he updates the Kerr-McGee files, showing a continuing record of corporate contempt for the lives of its workers and its neighbors. \$17.95. Cornell Paperbacks, [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu); phone: 607-277-2211.



**The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington**, by Maurice Isserman, tracks the well-known democratic socialist's life, from his Catholic upbringing to his transformation into one of the country's most influential social critics. Isserman explores the relationships that helped mold Harrington into the nation's foremost democratic socialist and tells how Harrington's participation in the

socialist, civil rights and union movements shaped his vision of this country. Harrington's landmark book, "The Other America," made poverty a national focus in the 1960s and made him a hero of the New Left. \$28.50. Public Affairs. Avail-



able in bookstores or, for more information, contact Public Affairs, Suite 1321, 250 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107; [www.publicaffairsbooks.com](http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com). ☐

## MUSIC

**Caution to the Wind**, a new CD by Phil Cohen and Patricia Ford, features a mix of folk ballads and acoustic country tunes written and scored by Cohen, who is UNITE's special projects coordinator for North Carolina and producer of UNITE's Whiteville Choir albums. Ford, a critically acclaimed vocalist, teamed with Cohen in 1997 to produce the CD "Fortunes of the Highway." Their new effort includes Cohen's "Hard Miles," which is dedicated to everyone who serves on the front lines of the union movement. \$12.95. Purchase online at [www.metalab.unc.edu/hardmile](http://www.metalab.unc.edu/hardmile), or send a check to Hard Miles Music, P.O. Box 5208, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. E-mail: [hardmile@sunsite.unc.edu](mailto:hardmile@sunsite.unc.edu). ☐

## TELEVISION

### Livelyhood



11 p.m.-7 a.m. world of work, the daily shift for more than 3 million people. The hourlong show highlights workers in 10 cities, including Las Vegas, where Durst finds all-night child care, golf ranges and tanning salons. While many of the one in five Americans working evenings, nights or rotating shifts may prefer different work hours, the workers depicted here enjoy third shift. Check the local television listings in your area. ☐

"Night Shift," premiering June 30 on PBS, launches the second season of *Livelyhood*, a television series about working families from the producers of "We Do the Work." Hosted by humorist Will Durst, "Night Shift" explores the

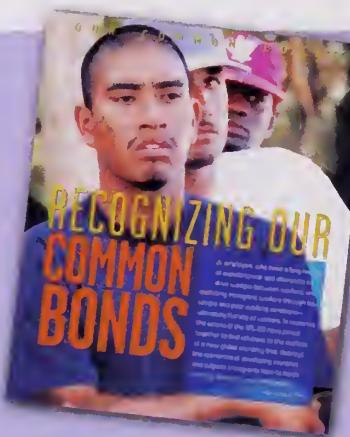
## GATHERINGS

**LaborFest 2000**, an annual cultural festival in San Francisco commemorating that city's July 1934 general strike, will feature union activities throughout July, including the International Labor Film and Video Festival, Poetry Night, labor photography exhibits and "Harry Bridges," glimpses of the life of the legendary Longshoreman by actor and writer Ian Ruskin. For more information and a calendar of activities, visit the website at [www.laborfest.net](http://www.laborfest.net) or e-mail [laborfest@hotmail.com](mailto:laborfest@hotmail.com).

**Jobs with Justice** will hold its annual meeting July 20-23 at the University of Massachusetts' Dartmouth campus. Union, community, religious and student activists are invited to attend workshops on such topics as the freedom to choose a voice at work, community and global campaigns for economic justice, a living wage, workers' rights boards, immigrant rights, affirmative action, direct action organizing and mobilization against sweatshops. For more information, contact Jobs with Justice at 501 3rd St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001; phone: 202-434-1106; fax: 202-434-1477; or visit the website at [www.jwj.org](http://www.jwj.org). ☐



**Recognizing Our Common Bonds**, a special section on immigrant workers published in the May 2000 *America@work*, now is available as a separate reprint. The eight-page article discusses the union movement's work to stop U.S. employers from exploiting fear and differences to drive wedges between workers. Together, unions are seeking solutions to a global economy that destroys the economies of developing countries and subjects immigrants here to harsh working conditions and harassment. Available free by calling 202-637-5044 in Washington, D.C., or 800-442-5645. ☐



Copy this page and spread the word about workers' rights and [workingfamilies.com](http://workingfamilies.com)!

# How Well Do You Know Your Rights@Work?



Take this quiz and find out:



1. U.S. workers have a right to safe jobs. But how many working people are hurt on the job each year?

A. 100,000      C. 1 million  
B. 500,000      D. Nearly 6 million

2. How old do you have to be before you are protected legally from job-related age discrimination?

A. 40      B. 50      C. 60



3. True or false: Although it's illegal to refuse someone a job just because of race or ethnicity, no law protects workers against ethnic slurs at work.

A. True      B. False

4. If you have a disability, your employer must:

A. Provide you the same tools or help for getting the job done that everyone else gets, but no more than that.  
B. Do whatever it takes to enable you to do the job.  
C. Make "reasonable accommodations" to enable you to do the job.



5. Is an employer legally allowed to refuse to hire a woman because she is noticeably pregnant?

A. Yes      B. No

Find the answers to these questions at  
**[workingfamilies.com](http://workingfamilies.com)**

the new Internet community for union activists. Click on Your Rights@Work in the Resources for Working Families box at [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com).

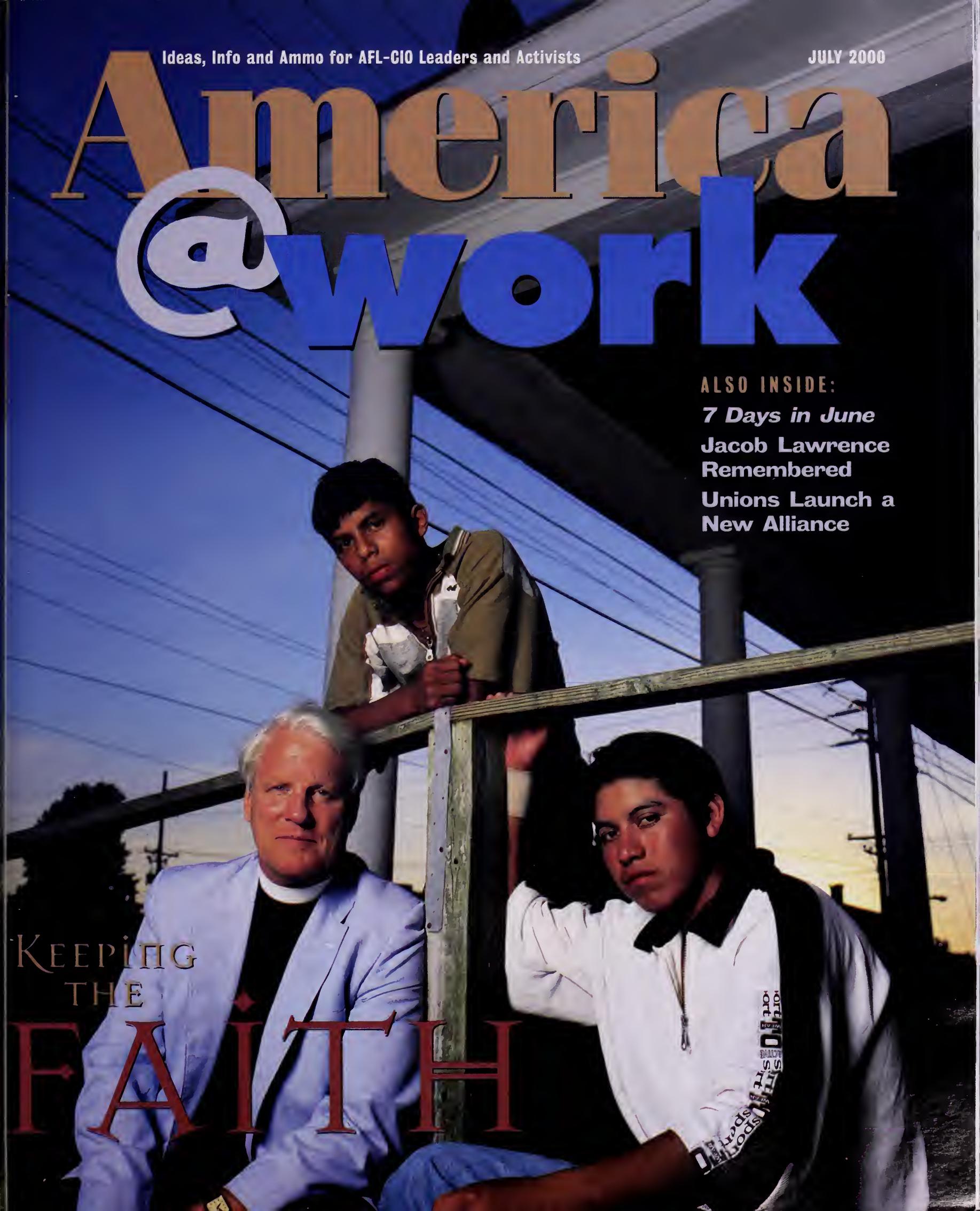
At [workingfamilies.com](http://workingfamilies.com), the AFL-CIO gateway to the Internet, you'll also find:

- News from your union
- Worker-friendly shopping, where you never have to worry about buying sweatshop-made goods
- Resources for working families
- Reliable, low-cost Internet service and more!

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JULY 2000

# America @ work

A color photograph of three people working on a wooden structure. In the foreground, a man with white hair and a blue suit jacket looks directly at the camera. Behind him, a woman in a white zip-up jacket with 'orthosport' and 'orthosport.com' printed on it is also looking at the camera. Above them, a young man in a tan jacket and white shirt is leaning over, working on the wooden beams. The background shows a clear sky and some power lines.

ALSO INSIDE:

**7 Days in June**

**Jacob Lawrence  
Remembered**

**Unions Launch a  
New Alliance**

KEEPING  
THE  
FAITH

# VOICES

## IDEAS AND VIEWS FROM YOU

"**I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED** not to have seen anything in America@work on the tremendous job our local did in getting the first prescription drug bill passed in the United States. Our local, along with SEIU [international], helped sponsor a bus trip to Canada filled with seniors and myself to purchase prescription drugs at a much lower cost. From that trip came a '60 Minutes' segment with Mike Wallace, and from there every major newspaper and television station was talking about the bill. Making politics work did just that for us in Maine and Local 1989."—Brenda Kaler, president, SEIU Local 1989, Augusta, Maine. Editor's note: Couldn't have said it better. Turn to page 5 for a roundup of state action on prescription drugs.

"**I JUST COMPLETED** the [AFL-CIO] Organizing Institute three-day training in Detroit and it was excellent. I am so pumped up and anxious to organize for social change. It was so inspiring to be involved with people with common goals...rebuilding the [union] movement. I learned so much from the teaching fellows, and more importantly, from my fellow participants who traveled from as far as Buffalo, N.Y., and Iowa. I learned what it takes to organize, and that's commitment, desire, determination, tenacity and drive! When I go on my first campaign, I will be taking the strength of the union movement with me. Thank you for this opportunity! Solidarity forever!"—Jennifer Ashford-Byers

"**GOV. JEANNE SHAHEEN** may have signed into law a bill clarifying New Hampshire's Equal Pay Act, but it was thanks to Mike Powers and Mark MacKenzie of the New Hampshire AFL-CIO that I was able to submit the bill that created real enforcement of equal pay for equal work without gender-based pay discrimination. New Hampshire's law now has teeth and a clear grievance process. Rep. Jeff Goley...a New Hampshire firefighter and union member, helped pass a compromise amendment in the Labor Committee that ultimately passed....As always, I am appreciative of the work you all do and the principles of fair pay for all which the AFL-CIO stands for...."—Rep. Linda L. Garrish, Manchester, N.H., (sponsor of HB 1450 on Equal Pay)

# America@work

July 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 7

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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$10/year for 11 issues. Send check to: AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 or order with credit card by calling 800-442-5645. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **America@work**, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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**members@work**

and collective power

in our

**communities@work**,

that's when you see

# America@work

## Here's What You Say ABOUT WHAT YOUR UNION IS DOING TO INCREASE SKILLS AND BOOST MEMBERSHIP:

"Graphic Communications' education directors met in Milwaukee to investigate distance learning options for apprenticeship and skill upgrading training. The directors...tested online and CD-based training....At the union's convention in September, the directors will propose a program to reach out to all GCIU segments—from desktop publishing to newspaper press operators to bindery workers—using a variety of distance learning modes."—Lauren Baker, director, Milwaukee Graphic Arts Institute and GCIU Local 577-M member

"[EVER SINCE IT was founded in 1896] The Boston Newspaper Printing Pressmen's Union Local 3...has held union awareness classes for apprentices [focusing on union history]. In 1999, the union expanded the program to include such workshops as steward training, parliamentary procedure, grievance procedure, diversity training or skills needed to help new members understand the principles of true unionism and become more active [in the union]....Local 3 is active in....community schools by sponsoring trips to the Lowell Mills so inner-city children can learn about the union movement."—Eugene Binda, director of training and education, The Boston Newspaper Printing Pressmen's Union Local 3

Denise Mitchell (Assistant to the President for Public Affairs); Donna M. Jablanski (Publications Director); Tula Cannell (Editor); Mike Hall, Laureen Lazarovici, James B. Parks (Assistant Editors); Arlee C. Green (Staff Writer); Colleen M. O'Neill (Proofreader/Copy Editor). Design: The Magazine Group Inc.

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New York and North Carolina union leaders met to draft plans to strengthen and unify all state and local union organizations so they can fight effectively for working family issues



# Building Understanding, Creating Change



VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER

**Creating change:** In Los Angeles, 20,000 people took part in the AFL-CIO immigration forum.

Following its historic February statement calling for new policies on immigration, the AFL-CIO launched a series of community forums to listen to immigrant workers and begin to discuss the next steps needed to protect their rights.

Under the banner "Building Understanding, Creating Change," immigrant workers at AFL-CIO forums in New York, Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles said they are denied their most basic rights—safe workplaces, overtime pay, the minimum wage and the freedom to form a union—and are harassed, threatened and fired when they stand up for their rights.

"It's like slavery almost," said Armando Torres, describing the construction crews he works on as a carpenter in

Atlanta. The crews typically work 12- to 15-hour days, with one break and one meal, he said. Often there was only one cooler of water at the job site, and when it was emptied, there was no more water for the day. No bathroom facilities are available most days, he said.

"Looking for a better future for our families is not illegal," Seattle construction worker José Angel Juarez Falcon said at the Los Angeles forum, where 17,000 people packed the Sports Arena and another 3,000 waited outside. Many workers said their working conditions improved dramatically after they organized a union and got a contract.

"We are workers who contribute to the economy," said housekeeper Zonia Villanueva at the New York City forum. "People depend on us to clean their houses and care for their children. We have been in the country for many years and we pay taxes. We want to stand up for our rights. We

want to live and work free from intimidation. We only want the respect that every worker deserves."

At all four forums, workers said the system of sanctions for hiring undocumented immigrant workers needs to be replaced with one that punishes employers, not employees, to ensure that undocumented workers are not exploited and abused by unscrupulous employers.

"These sanctions punish employees—not employers—and it is clear they need to be replaced by programs that will punish wrongdoing employers," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, who chaired all four forums.

Those testifying at the forums also called for amnesty for undocumented immigrants as the best way to stop abuses. "Amnesty is very important, whether you are here two weeks or 10 years, because if you don't have documents, you are exploited," says Eliseo Chavez, a Chicago day laborer. @

# Class of 2000

When Sandra Knutson, office administrator for the Air Line Pilots, addressed the National Labor College's second graduating class June 24, she praised her peers for overcoming obstacles in balancing college, work, family and union responsibilities to achieve their goal: a college degree.

"Raising children and grandchildren, traveling long distances to get here, suffering through personal tragedies—family illness, financial hardship and the loss of loved ones....No matter what the barriers, we had the guts to climb into the ring and drive the distance," said

Knutson, class speaker, who also lauded the flexibility of the program, which combines independent study with in-residence sessions on campus.

The 76 students who made up the Class of 2000 range in age from 34 to 62 and represent 28 different unions. NLC President Sue Schurman notes that 31 percent of the graduates are female and 35 percent are people of color. Seventeen graduates from Antioch College's last class at the NLC also took part in the weekend-long celebrations at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md.

Between 1998 and 1999, the Labor College registered a fourfold increase in students, from 400 to 1,600, Schurman says; the NLC goal is to enroll 10,000 students in credit courses in 2010. The NLC was established at the Meany Center in 1997 and requires that students complete at least eight labor studies courses toward a bachelor of arts degree.

T Santora, a representative for Communications Workers Local 9000 in Los Angeles, says taking classes "with my peers in a movement I love" was among the best parts of the program. Santora, national co-president of Pride At Work, the AFL-CIO constituency group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers, urges others considering a return to college to "get to it." @



ISAAC WILSON

**Hats off:** The National Labor College Class of 2000 graduated June 24.

# The Right Rx for Working Families

Prescription drug prices are out of control, soaring at twice the rate of inflation—and the 70 million Americans who do not have insurance coverage are forced to pay these exorbitant prices, according to the Center for Policy Alternatives. Many are seniors on fixed incomes or low-income working families.

Congressional Democrats and Vice President Al Gore have proposed prescription drug plans that would be administered by Medicare and offer guaranteed benefits. But on June 28, the U.S. House of Representatives, on a mostly party-line vote (217-214), passed a Republican-backed prescription drug bill that does not offer seniors a guaranteed benefit, but instead allows private insurance companies to set their own terms and limits on benefits, premiums, co-pays and deductibles. The bill “benefits the companies who make prescription drugs, not the seniors who need to take them,” President Clinton said.

Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO and its affiliate unions joined last month with CPA, in coalition with community and state activists, senior groups, state lawmakers and family organizations, to launch a 21-state grassroots campaign to lower prescription drug prices. In those states, unions and their allies will mobilize to pass laws patterned after a recently enacted Maine law (The Prescription Drug Fair Pricing Act) that uses the state’s bulk purchasing power to negotiate steep discounts from drug makers and pass those savings on to residents who have no prescription drug insurance coverage.

Jan Laue, executive vice president of the Iowa Federation of Labor, says Iowans increasingly are making trips to Canada and Mexico, where drug prices for identical prescriptions are 30 percent to 70 percent lower than in the United States.

“Medicine is not a luxury. The most profitable industry in the country is charging the highest prices to those Americans who can least afford it,” Laue says.

For more information, including model legislation and background on Maine’s Prescription Drug Fair Pricing Act, visit [www.cfpa.org](http://www.cfpa.org). @

## 4,024 Workers Join SPEEA/IFPTE

The solidarity generated during the 40-day strike this year by Seattle engineers at Boeing built the foundation for thousands more workers at Boeing’s Wichita, Kan., plant to win a voice at work. On June 29, 4,024 technical, administrative and clerical workers voted for the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), an affil-

iate of the Professional and Technical Engineers.

The vote came three months after the successful action by 20,000 Seattle-area SPEEA members against Boeing—the largest white-collar strike in history. Although the Wichita workers did not walk out, they supported the striking workers in Seattle and contributed to the strike fund.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Standing Together, Staying Strong

By reaching out to the Stamford, Conn., community—including neighborhood leaders, clergy and lawmakers—97 workers at the Atria Assisted Living Facility overcame management’s strenuous anti-union campaign and voted for a voice at work with SEIU District 1199NE last November, becoming the first workers in the 200-home chain to join a union. In June, the workers went on to win a stunning contract—one that contains a management neutrality clause for a soon-to-be-opened second facility in Stamford, says organizer Kate Andrias. The pact also includes wage increases of more than 30 percent and cuts health care co-payments in half.

Before the 1999 election was set, Andrias says Atria bosses stepped up their anti-union efforts. But management didn’t count on a firestorm of support for the workers from the community. Six local clergy members sent a letter to Atria’s CEO and the Stamford home administrator urging management to stop “intimidating employees into saying ‘no’ to the union.” Three religious leaders also met Atria’s CEO at the firm’s Kentucky headquarters, and sent a letter supporting the workers. State Senate Majority Leader George Jepsen (D) also sent the workers a letter of support.

“We got the victory at Atria Stamford by standing together and staying strong—and through hard work,” says Brenda Herrington, a receptionist at Atria.

At the same time, the workers learned the real estate investment firm of Lazard Freres owns 90 percent of Atria—and union pension funds make up a good chunk of investments managed by Lazard Freres. Union leaders called the firm to remind it of the scope of the union movement’s investment. Less than a week later, the contract was settled. @



A fair shake: Community support led to success for workers in Stamford, Conn.

JANE MACALEVEY

mean-spirited and not something you would expect from a world-class company that respects its employees.”

“Despite the opposition campaign by the company, this vote continues to show that professional and technical workers feel the need for a voice in the workplace,” says IFPTE President Paul Almeida. @

Solidarity: Striking workers at the Museum of Modern Art get support from New York Street Heat.

council's director of public policy. Union organizing directors pick possible Street Heat actions and discuss how their unions can help. Recently, 500 people gathered outside the Museum of Modern Art to support striking members of UAW Local 2110/Professional and Administrative Staff Association; union members also took part in a rally at Rockefeller Plaza to show solidarity with the 14 unions representing nearly 40,000 workers in nationwide bargaining with General Electric.

In Syracuse, the labor council contacts members through its monthly newsletter and website, but the "best way to get in touch with hundreds of people in a hurry is e-mail," says Mark Spadafore, the labor council's field coordinator, who maintains a list of more than 150 activists. Five hundred activists recently turned out to support 3,241 teachers and school personnel who are at a bargaining impasse with the city.

Although Street Heat is designed to organize actions rapidly, Ott says, "the more lead time we have, the more we can do for a local." ☐

## Street Heat, New York Style

Empire State employers are learning that New York unions are ready to fight injustice in a New York minute. Through Street Heat, part of the AFL-CIO Union Cities mobilization efforts, New York central labor councils and unions are rallying to support the struggles of their members and all workers on short notice across the state.

The New York City Central Labor Council, which holds three or four Street Heat actions each day, reaches members through blast faxes, e-mails and "a lot of strategic calls" to ensure a good turnout, says Ed Ott, the labor

## Unions Come Together in New Mexico Crisis

New Mexico's union family came together to help victims recover after a devastating wildfire swept through Los Alamos in May, destroying more than 200 homes and apartment buildings, leaving more than 400 families homeless and scorching 40,000 acres.

Thirty-four union members

lost their homes to the flames, and another 1,800, including many at the Los Alamos National Laboratories, were temporarily out of work, says Mike Swisher, AFL-CIO community services liaison at the New Mexico Federation of Labor.

Teamsters Local 492 provided volunteers and tractors

## UNITE Honors Studs Terkel

Studs Terkel (left), noted author and chronicler of working Americans, received the Award for Public Service from UNITE President Jay Mazur May 23. The award is presented through UNITE's Sidney Hillman Foundation, named for the first president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, a forerunner of UNITE. The foundation sponsors annual awards to encourage social responsibility among journalists, writers and public figures. ☐



## Public Opposes Privatization

Only one-third of Americans think public services should be privatized, and the majority of those surveyed say private companies with public contracts should be held accountable for costs and services provided, according to a survey commissioned by AFSCME and released in May.

"Voters want efficiency and accountability in government," says AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, "but they don't believe that business is a substitute for good government."

The survey of 600 people by Lake Snell Perry & Associates found that only 32 percent favor privatization, while 44 percent said they are opposed. Fully 53 percent said they would support legislation requiring private companies seeking public contracts to compete openly for bids. The same percentage supports requiring contractors to reveal political contributions to elected officials, pay workers' health care and offer jobs to qualified public employees whose jobs are eliminated.

As part of its effort to document the effects of privatization, AFSCME released a report showing that when school transportation services are contracted-out, services actually cost taxpayers more. The campaign involves training local union leaders in communications strategies and coalition building and in organizing privatized workers. Last year, one-third of AFSCME's newly organized members came from the private sector. ☐

to haul six Red Cross trailers from Albuquerque. Working in conjunction with United Parcel Service, Local 492 volunteers transported more than 90,000 articles of donated clothing, which were unloaded by 52 volunteers from the New Mexico Building and Construction Trades Council.

More than 125 volunteers from the Northern New Mexico and Central New Mexico central labor councils unloaded and sorted donations to emergency food banks to help fire victims. Twenty

Carpenters members from locals 1315 and 1319 built special devices to sift through ashes for personal items.

Through donations and fund-raising efforts, Electrical Workers Local 611, Sheet Metal Workers Local 49, Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 412 and the two central labor councils provided \$7,500 in disaster relief funds.

To make a donation, send a check, payable to "Fire Relief," to the New Mexico Federation of Labor, 130 Alvarado Road, N.E., Albuquerque, N.M. 87108. ☐

# Texas Truth Squad Rides into Town

**S**an Antonio school teacher Minnie Sanchez is spending part of her summer vacation crisscrossing the country with the AFL-CIO Texas Truth Squad, telling workers the real story behind Gov. George W. Bush's record and rhetoric.

"Don't be fooled. I am here to tell you that George W. Bush is no friend of education, no friend of school children and no friend of working families," the eighth-grade teacher and AFT member told about 200 Philadelphia-area union members June 29 at the Truth Squad's first stop on a nationwide summer tour.

The Texas workers are telling union audiences about Bush's six-year record that has left the state last in the number of people with health insurance, 45th in college entrance scores and the 48th best place to raise children among the 50 states.

Sanchez explained how one of Texas' poorest school districts lost some \$4 million in state aid because of a privately funded voucher scheme blessed by Bush.

Joining Sanchez were Eugene Graham, an AFSCME Local 3807 member and corrections officer who talked about Bush's anti-public employee, pro-privatization policies, and retired school food service worker and 62-year-old SEIU Local 100 member Irene Ford, who warned about Bush's plan to raise the Social Security retirement age. ☐

## One Step Closer to a Living Wage

Some 12,000 low-wage, primarily female home care workers in Illinois successfully fought for a state law raising their wages from \$6 to \$7 per hour, effective July 1. The SEIU Local 880 members generated such community support for the proposal that Gov. George Ryan (R) backed the measure and made it part of his budget package. Union members vowed to keep up their efforts to secure a living wage—\$8.20 per hour for a family of four—and win health insurance coverage. ☐

## OUT FRONT

If you want to know what America would be like with George W. Bush as president, take a look at what life is like for Texas working families after almost six years with Bush as governor.

Texas today isn't a great place to be sick. Nearly 25 percent of Texans have no health insurance and Texas ranks flat worst among states in children with insurance. Bush has opposed including more children from working families in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and his own aides acknowledge he has not made health care a priority.

Texas is a rough place to be a kid even if you have health insurance. The state ranks 46th in child poverty—26.2 percent of Texas children are poor—and 45th among states in SAT scores. And it's a hard place to be a teacher. "Teachers starting out here in Texas are being paid just over \$20,000," says teacher Minnie Sanchez, an AFT member. "Bush is constantly trying to divert badly needed resources from public schools and teachers' salaries." In 1997, Bush tried to raid the teachers' pension fund to pay for a huge tax cut for the wealthy.

Sanchez is part of a traveling Texas Truth Squad that includes Eugene Graham, a corrections officer and AFSCME Local 3807 member. Although Texas has seen a 400 percent rise in the prison population since 1988, annual pay for correctional officers averages \$21,744—46th in the country and more than \$6,000 behind the national average. Bush provided quite a picture of himself as an employer of state workers when he was asked what he has done to help state law enforcement officers. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, Bush answered: "We give them a heck of a Christmas party."

Graham isn't impressed. "I work six straight days—two days I work for 16 hours—yet my family can barely make ends meet," says Graham, who makes \$12 an hour and pays \$225 a month for health insurance. Last year, Graham and his co-workers got a modest raise, but it was mostly eaten up by increases in his health insurance co-payments.

Among Bush proposals that would harm working families is a risky plan for privatizing Social Security that would raise the retirement age and cut guaranteed benefits. Truth Squad member Irene Ford worries about Bush's Social Security scheme.

"I worked for 28 years at a back-breaking job," says Ford, a retired food worker and SEIU Local 100 member. "My pension doesn't even cover my rent and my health care. My Social Security benefit will be the only way I can afford food and utilities....Folks are half dead when they retire—they'd be dead by the time they get to 70."

Let's wish Ms. Ford good luck—and mobilize so Bush can't do to America what he's done in Texas.

(Sources for Texas statistics are available in downloadable fliers in the People-Powered Politics section of [www.aflcio.org/labor2000](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000) and [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com).) ☐

## The Truth from Texas



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# KEEPING THE FAITH

AT GROCERY stores along the Eastern Shore of Delaware and Maryland, union activists distributed letters from the Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance calling for justice for chicken catchers at Perdue Farms, one of the largest poultry processors in the country.

"Before a piece of chicken arrives on your table, chicken catchers have to catch those birds and load them onto trucks for slaughter. It's a dirty, nasty job," the letter read. Workers must catch nearly 2,500 birds "before they can afford to bring home one Perdue chicken from the grocery store."

As part of the campaign, the Rev. Jim Lewis, an Episcopal priest and DPJA president, and DPJA Executive Director Carole Morrison urged shoppers to call Perdue's CEO and tell him to do the right thing and "respect the workers' right to form a union."



Faith works: Kim Bobo, executive director of the Interfaith Committee, says unions working with religious communities "turn faith into action."

After being inundated by phone calls and e-mails, including consumer alerts sent out by SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign, CEO Jim Perdue agreed to a union election. And on July 6, 69 catchers from Georgetown, Del., and Salisbury, Md., won a voice at work with Food and Commercial Workers.

Formed in 1997, the poultry justice alliance is a coalition of 17 organizations, including workers, farmers, environmentalists, civil rights activists, unions and faith-based groups. Its strength results from a long-term relationship built on mutual trust. "We put aside our own agendas and work together because we know that's the only way we're going to succeed," says Denise Crowe, organizer for UFCW Local 27.

"The chicken industry is playing the same games on all of us, so if we are going to make a change, we need all of us together," Lewis says.

Through the union's connection with the alliance, activists have created a social ser-

vice center for Latinos and brought a full-time lawyer on board to help immigrants—achievements that otherwise might not have happened if the union struggled alone.

At the same time, the union supports campaigns backed by the other members of the alliance. "They're our allies and we support them just as they support us," Crowe says.

Increasingly, unions are building long-term relationships with the religious community that have led to significant roles for religious leaders in such workers' struggles as the Detroit newspaper lockout, in which retired United Methodist Bishop Jesse DeWitt, president of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, has been a staunch backer of workers. Recently, the United Methodist Church, at DeWitt's urging, called for a boycott of Gannett-owned *USA Today*. The *Free Press*, owned by Knight Ridder, and the *Detroit News*, owned by Gannett, locked out 600 workers four years ago.

Civil rights leaders such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Joseph Lowery, president emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, have walked picket lines with striking workers just as union members marched with them in civil and human rights demonstrations. Msgr. George Higgins, often called "labor's priest," has marched with and supported working men and women's right to form a union and been involved in many of unions' major campaigns for more than 50 years. The late Cardinal John O'Connor lent his support to many worker causes in New York City, often speaking out in support of living

# BY JAMES B. PARKS



**Faith in action:** The Rev. Jim Lewis has long been involved in the fight for justice among poultry workers.

wages, safe workplaces and respect at work.

"Cardinal O'Connor, the son of a union craftsman, was among the most outspoken supporters of the right to organize," says Michele McDonald, president of the Federation of Catholic Teachers, an affiliate of the Office and Professional Employees. "Never once did he turn me down when I asked to meet with him regarding any union situation."

In Los Angeles, several members of the clergy spoke at the June 10 AFL-CIO forum on immigration, including Auxiliary Bishop of the Los Angeles Archdiocese Gabino Zavala; two African American pastors, Rev. Leonard Jackson and Rev. Isam Taylor; Rev. Bill Delany, a Catholic priest; Rabbi Mark Dworkin; and Cardinal Roger Mahony, who developed close ties with the Farm Workers more than 20 years ago. In April, Mahony actively supported the thousands of mostly immigrant janitors, SEIU members, striking for wages that would support their families.

"The cardinal has not been afraid to put the church's teachings into practice. He understands the interests of immigrants and of his largely immigrant church," says Miguel Contreras, executive secretary-treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. "He knows that the best anti-poverty program for his parishioners is a union job."

In Little Rock, Ark., on May 26, the first day of a re-run union election for registered nurses at St. Vincent's Hospital, an ad signed by 51 local clergy members appeared in the local newspaper reminding the workers they have a right to choose a union. "We got 50 copies of the paper and they were all over the hospital that day," says AFL-CIO Arkansas State Director Melba Collins. That was just one of the many actions by the Arkansas Religious Committee for Workplace Fairness that led to a win for OPEIU at St. Vincent, the first private hospital in the state to be organized.

"The religious community was one of the main reasons we won," Collins says. A delegation from the committee presented a petition with 700 signatures to hospital management during the campaign.

The campaign ran for more than a year. During Labor Day weekend in 1999, 13 union members spoke in local churches, and each one touched on the issues at St. Vincent, Collins says. The first election in November 1999 was marred by employer abuses and the National Labor Relations Board ordered a new vote.

Herman Bryant, president of the Little Rock chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, helped organize African American clergy members who previously had not been involved in worker issues. He worked tirelessly to line up African American ministers to appear in 30-second radio ads in support of the nurses.

Now, with contract talks going on at St. Vincent, the religious group is still at work. They are circulating another petition, this time calling on the hospital to bargain with the nurses.

In Omaha, Neb., the UFCW joined in June with Omaha Together, One Community, a coalition of 38 religious organizations to organize more than 4,000 employees of Omaha-area meat packing companies.

There is a human cost to get the steak you eat "from the hoof to your plate," said Mark Darby, OTOC co-chair. "The cost in human terms is measured in bodies that are slowly destroyed by rapid and constant repetitive motion, by a line speed that only increases and by inadequate conditions and unsafe work practices."

OTOC congregations distributed union cards at their services in June. More than 1,000 workers signed cards in the first three weeks of the campaign.

### Spreading the message

A major element in unions' outreach to the religious community is Labor in the Pulpits, a joint effort between the AFL-CIO and the NICWJ. Labor in the Pulpits links congregations with union members who come as people of faith to speak at worship services about conditions of working people and how the union movement is working for change. Last year, 72 central labor councils and state federations participated in Labor in the Pulpits during the Labor Day weekend, more than double the number the year before. Union speakers addressed almost 100,000 people at more than 600 worship services.

The union movement also is training a new generation of religious leaders committed to worker justice. Expanding on the success of the AFL-CIO Union Summer program, in which aspiring organizers from across the country take part in four weeks of hands-on, union-community training, the federation and NICWJ this year launched Seminary Summer. After an initial one-week overview, 23 seminarians, rabbinical students and other future religious leaders are spending nine



**Faith into practice: Longtime union supporter Cardinal Roger Mahony joins workers at an AFL-CIO immigration forum in Los Angeles.**

weeks in 14 cities working with unions on organizing campaigns or first-contract efforts, helping to build alliances among religious, community and union activists to support workers in their fight for a voice at work.

### Planning for the future

Building on the growing number of union partnerships with local congregations, the NICWJ and the AFL-CIO co-sponsored a Religion and Labor Conference in Los Angeles last fall. Conference participants developed a new "Partnership for Worker Justice," which calls on communities of faith and unions to join together to improve conditions for workers, especially those in such low-wage and fast-growing service industries as health care and hotels. They also urged partnerships between religious groups and unions to fight for living wages and to support striking, permanently replaced and locked-out workers.

"Working in partnership with the union movement allows the religious community to turn its faith into action," says Kim Bobo, executive director of the NICWJ.

Religious leaders provide a strong moral presence to workers' issues, Bobo says. They can address issues in a way that appeals to a broad cross section of the community that may not otherwise be willing to hear the union message; they also have experience in educating and mobilizing large numbers of people. Religious groups should be brought in early on, "rather than waiting until the last minute when you realize you need somebody to pray at a rally," Bobo says.

"There is no separation between spirituality and social action," Lewis says. "It's not enough to bury people, marry them and visit them when they're sick. This economy is hurting people and we have to call the church to action."

### Fighting for a living wage

Many faith-based activists have joined with unions to support living-wage campaigns. For Sammie Moshenberg, the struggle for a living wage in her hometown of Alexandria, Va., is about doing what's morally right. "People who work should earn a decent wage, especially people who are paid with taxpayer dollars. My tax dollars should not subsidize poverty," says Moshenberg, the director of the Washington, D.C., office of the National Council of Jewish Women.

A coalition of groups, including numerous

## ACTION RESOURCES:

*Labor in the Pulpits Labor Day 2000 Organizing Kit & Worship Resources Guide*, jointly produced by the AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Contact the AFL-CIO at 202-637-5280; fax: 202-637-5012; website: [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org); or contact NICWJ at 773-728-8400; fax: 773-728-8409; website: [www.nicwj.org](http://www.nicwj.org).

NICWJ resources available online from [www.nicwj.org/pages/materialstop/html](http://www.nicwj.org/pages/materialstop/html):

- *Faith Works* newsletter with special inserts of interfaith prayer services for worker justice, sweat-free holiday giving and interfaith resources for Labor Day.
- Booklets covering such topics as "Why Unions Matter," "Living Wage Facts and Resources" and "What Faith Groups Say about the Right to Organize."

Several faith-based organizations address worker issues on their websites, including:

- Catholic Relief Services, Work of Human Hands, [www.catholicrelief.org/what/us\\_programs/work/index.cfm](http://www.catholicrelief.org/what/us_programs/work/index.cfm).
- American Muslim Council, [www.amconline.org/newamc](http://www.amconline.org/newamc).
- Eighth Day Center Search for Justice, [www.op.org/DOMCentral/justice/8day.htm](http://www.op.org/DOMCentral/justice/8day.htm).
- Evangelicals for Social Action, [www.esa-online.org](http://www.esa-online.org).
- Sojourners magazine, [www.sojourners.com](http://www.sojourners.com).
- Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Commission on Social Action, [www.uahcweb.org/csa](http://www.uahcweb.org/csa).
- National Conference of Catholic Bishops/U.S. Catholic Conference, Office of Social Development and World Peace, [www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/index.htm](http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/index.htm).

congregations, worked for two years to gain passage of a living wage in Alexandria, Moshenberg says. They held rallies and lobbied city council members to support a living wage. In June, the Alexandria City Council approved a \$9.84-per-hour living wage, effective July 1, for any worker on a service contract with the city. The congregations' involvement in the lobbying effort was crucial, she says. "I think it's extremely important to have religious voices raised. It adds moral credence to the position, and it reminds decision makers that worker issues are moral issues."

### Acting locally and globally

Alliances between unions and faith-based groups to gain living wages across the nation are models for accomplishing a range of goals, says Jim Wallis, editor-in-chief of *Sojourners* magazine and head of Call to Renewal, a coalition of religious and community organizations that supports the struggles of the poor and oppressed.

"If we say that someone who is working hard and full-time shouldn't be poor, or unable to support a family, some alternatives must be found," Wallis says. One idea is a "livable wage," that includes affordable housing, expanded Earned Income Tax Credit, affordable health care and child care and expanded access to transportation. The religious community and the union movement could put a livable wage on the political agenda, Wallis says, the same way they put the issue of debt relief on the international agenda with Jubilee 2000/USA.

Jubilee 2000, a global, faith-based movement fighting for debt relief for developing countries that cannot meet their citizens' basic needs, "shows real signs of emerging as a new movement," Wallis says. Since April 9, when hundreds of workers joined with Jubilee 2000 activists in Washington, D.C., the campaign has gained support from a broad range of leaders and organizations.

Like Jubilee 2000, union coalition building with faith-based groups in living wage campaigns, with striking workers and the Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance is laying the foundation for a new social movement committed to social and economic justice. The movement combines the moral power of both the religious community and the union movement. "All religions believe in justice," Bobo says. "So when the union movement fights for decent wages, benefits and working conditions for low-income families, it is doing the work of God." ☽

# Putting Your FAITH to Work for Workers

By Kim Bobo

PEOPLE OF FAITH are joining with unions and community groups to bring justice to workers in the United States and around the world. Despite the booming economy, too many workers are not paid wages and benefits that can support families. Almost half of all new jobs in this country pay less than \$16,000 a year, not nearly enough to lift families out of poverty. When workers try to organize a union to improve wages or benefits, they run the risk of being fired, intimidated or harassed simply for exercising their rights.

Here are nine ways your congregation or faith-based group can help workers gain the dignity and justice they deserve:

- **Pray** for all workers, especially those who work in sweatshops and those who are on strike, downsized or locked-out.
- **Volunteer to speak** to the congregation at an appropriate time, such as over the Labor Day weekend. Hundreds of congregations have participated in Labor in the Pulpits programs conducted jointly by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and central labor councils and state federations in which union leaders are recruited and trained to speak in congregations about the shared values between people of faith and unions.
- **Seek** to ensure that all the workers employed by your congregation are paid wages that can support family health coverage.
- **Develop** a construction policy for your congregation to make sure that repairs and construction work are done by contractors and subcontractors that treat workers justly. (Order a copy of "Building Projects and Religious Values" from the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, 773-728-8400.)
- **Structure time** for members to talk about how they practice their faith on the job. Most workers face challenging ethical questions at work. Create opportunities for members to talk about their work lives and find support for ethical dilemmas.
- **Encourage** members of your congregation to advocate for public policies that seek justice for all workers, including decent wages and health care benefits.
- **Boycott** products produced by companies at which workers are organizing to improve conditions if a boycott can effectively encourage a just resolution. For a list of boycotted products, visit [www.unionlabel.org](http://www.unionlabel.org).
- **Include** bulletin inserts on workers' rights jointly produced by NICWJ and the U.S. Department of Labor to inform workers in your congregation about workers' rights that are protected under state and federal laws. Many workers, especially low-wage workers, are underpaid or taken advantage of because they don't know their rights or the correct procedures for filing complaints. (The inserts are available from NICWJ, 773-728-8400.)
- **Investigate** sweatshops in your own community. Many of us think about sweatshops as garment factories in Indonesia or Chinatown in New York City—and there are plenty of sweatshops in those places. But there usually are sweatshops in our midst—perhaps not garment sweatshops, but sweatshops nonetheless because of routine violations of labor laws.

*Kim Bobo is executive director of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. For more information on NICWJ, call 773-728-8400 or visit [www.nicwj.org](http://www.nicwj.org). ☽*

# 7 Days in June:

## BIGGER AND BETTER

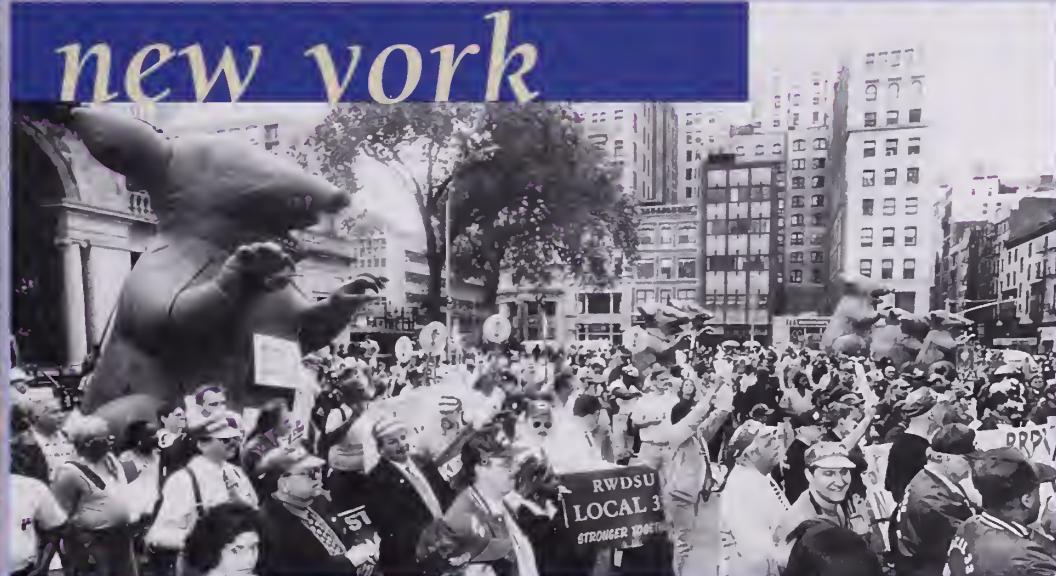
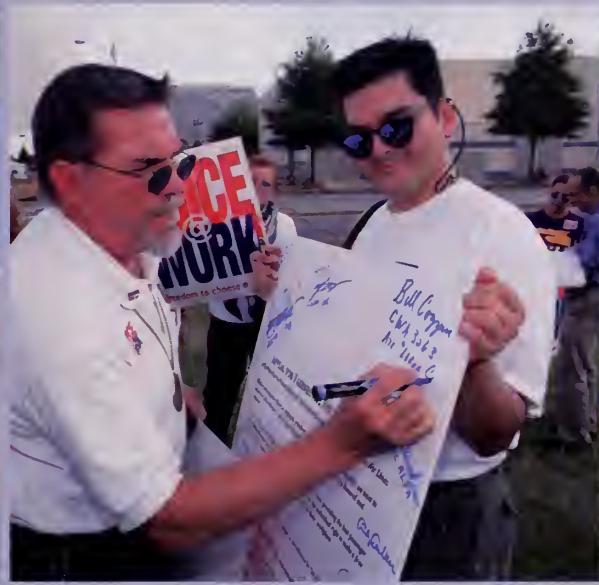
**T**ODAY, MORE AND MORE WORKERS SEEKING BETTER WORKING conditions and a voice on the job are coming together in unions. And employers are using legal as well as illegal tactics to deny those workers the freedom to choose a voice at work. Like the anti-union videos new Wal-Mart employees say they must watch as part of their orientation. Or the nurses pulled away from their patients for one-on-one meetings with supervisors. Or the workers in every occupation who face endless legal appeals by employers seeking to delay collective bargaining after workers have voted for a union.

Stories like these are common. Ninety-one percent of employers, when faced with employees who want to join together in a union, force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 80 percent hire outside



consultants to run anti-union campaigns; and half of employers threaten to shut down if employees join together in a union, says Prof. Kate Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University.

In June, unions shined a spotlight on employers' efforts to interfere with workers' freedom to choose for themselves whether they want to join or form a union. Enlisting the support of community and religious groups, elected officials and other workers, they rallied, picketed and listened to each other's stories during *7 Days in June*, a week of activities highlighting why working men and women want unions and the obstacles they face when they try to join them. In 1998, the weeklong series of actions began as a successful one-day campaign that grew last year to a seven-day event involving 15,000 people. This year, nearly 200 events in dozens of cities energized hundreds of union activists for ongoing efforts to help workers who are forming unions, seeking a better life for themselves, their families and their communities. @



In Atlanta, workers rally to support a voice at work with flight attendants at Delta Air Lines, which bumped passengers from flights to ferry flight attendants to see anti-union videos. In New York City, 20 giant inflatable rats march with 500 union, religious and community activists to support workers in nearly two dozen organizing and contract campaigns. Los Angeles County Federation of Labor Executive Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Contreras (p. 12) welcomes 20,000 flag-waving activists to the Sports Arena for the AFL-CIO's final immigration forum. The crowd also cheered Farm Workers President Arturo Rodriguez and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (p. 13). Eight-year-old Miami resident Jessenia Bravo asks union members to support her father, fired for protesting unsanitary conditions at Goya Foods, where workers are fighting for a first contract with UNITE.



FRANK SNYDER



JANA BIRCHUM/IMPACT VISUALS

**Steelworkers President George Becker (top) calls an union activists in Pittsburgh to rededicate themselves to helping workers get justice on the job. In San Antonio, local union activists and national union leaders riding the San Antonio "Justice Bus" helped workers at KO Steel get an election date in their efforts to join IUE. Tejana trumpet players, members of the Musicians Union, entertain bus riders, who also stopped at Sany's corporate offices asking for a voice on the job for recording artists.**



## WORKERS' RIGHTS: U.S. Has a Long Way to Go

**W**hat does the United States have in common with Honduras and Paraguay? All three countries exclude agricultural workers from many laws protecting workers' freedom to form unions. And what does the United States have in common with Madagascar and Niger? In all three countries, it's legal for employers to replace workers who go on strike to improve their working conditions.

These are some of the findings of a first-of-its-kind report from the International Labor Organization, "Your Voice at Work." The study from the United Nations-affiliated body reports that workers face intimidation, threats and even murder in many parts of the world when they try to gain a voice at the workplace.

Although freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining have been recognized as fundamental rights by the 175 member nations of the ILO, "we are still a long way from universal acceptance of these...in practice," the report says, adding that "governments, as guardians of democracy, need to do more than pay lip service" to basic workers' rights.

The U.S. Department of Labor, in its annual report to the ILO, admits the extent of these problems here at home. "The United States acknowledges that there are aspects of this system that fail to fully protect the rights to organize and bargain collectively of all employees in all circumstances," the report says, noting that workers face the risk of getting fired when they try to exercise their voice at work and that employers have more access to workers than do union advocates.

While it is illegal to fire a worker for union organizing activities, employers routinely flout the law. At an Iowa 7 Days in June event, Charlie Major, who worked at a Wal-Mart department store, told a town hall meeting, "There are three ways to get fired from Wal-Mart: sexual harassment, dating one of the other employees—or saying the word 'union.'" He said working at Wal-Mart was like living in East Berlin, where "people are supposed to spy on each other. It's as close to a sweatshop as I can imagine."

The full ILO report is available on the Internet at [www.ilo.org/voice@work](http://www.ilo.org/voice@work). ☐

# Jacob Lawrence REMEMBERED



THE PHILIPS COLLECTION

I am not sure when I first saw a Jacob Lawrence painting. At a certain moment in time, I became conscious of him as a painter and historian, and I have often had the feeling that other people experienced Jacob Lawrence in a similar way.

Jacob Lawrence, the famous painter of the black experience, lost his battle with cancer June 9. A resident of Seattle, he was in many respects a resident of wherever black America was to be found. Jacob Lawrence, whose work became known to a national audience in the 1940s, came to be openly embraced by the U.S. trade union movement only in the past 20 years. This is probably a reflection of the changing mood within the union movement and its greater sensitivity to experiences within the working class hitherto ignored.

Lawrence was most widely known for his series on the Great Migration, the trek

of millions of African Americans from the South to the Northeast, Midwest and, ultimately, the West Coast. This mass movement of people had been largely ignored or marginalized by artists and historians alike. Lawrence captured this experience in his various paintings and told a visual story of this exodus.

The Great Migration, which commenced when World War I cut short the flow of European labor to the United States, changed black America in its fundamentals. Up through World War I, the African American workforce largely had been limited to agriculture, domestic service, and to varying degrees, the railroads and some crafts. With the Great Migration, millions of African Americans entered the industrial working class, a fact that changed the dynamics of cities and changed the complexion—literally and figuratively—of the U.S. working class. This migration served to fuel a large part of the base for the Gar-

vey movement (the so-called Back to Africa movement, led by Marcus Garvey, which was the largest mass movement of African Americans). It also served to lay the foundations for the pivotal role that black workers were to play in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s and 1940s.

Lawrence's paintings looked at this experience not from the standpoint of the disinterested observer, but as a son portraying his family. His paintings exhibited a richness and flavor that made them easily recognizable and equally easy with which to identify.

The recognition of Lawrence's work by increasing sections of the union movement is an important development. This recognition helps our movement understand that the U.S. working class is far from monolithic, but is a composite of various strands and patterns tied together in an unusual quilt. For this alone, our movement owes him a great debt.

Although he has left us, we should be thrilled that he breathed, worked, laughed and struggled among us. 

—Bill Fletcher Jr.

AFL-CIO Assistant to the President



SPIKE MAFFORD

UNIONS LAUNCH

# A New ALLIANCE

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

W

HAT IF EVERY COMMUNITY COULD mobilize hundreds or even thousands of activists on short notice to rally in support of an organizing campaign? What if unions and community groups could pull together enough voters to oust anti-worker politicians from office?

Many in the union movement already are doing just that—and for the past three years, leaders from international and local unions, state federations and central labor councils have been coming together to explore ways to strengthen and unify all state and local union organizations so they can win on working family issues and create an environment that supports workers' freedom to choose a voice on the job.

Their efforts resulted in the New Alliance, a road map for restructuring the union movement. The New Alliance seeks to build strength and unity at the local, state and national levels by defining the roles and responsibilities of union organizations, including planning and budgeting strategically and boosting participation with state federations and central labor councils. Last October, the AFL-CIO Executive Council approved the New Alliance proposal at the federation's convention.

"We've begun to regain our voice in workplaces across the country," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told New York activists at the first New Alliance kickoff. "But we need to triple our level of activity to begin to rebuild" the proportion of union members in the U.S. workforce—a crucial prerequisite to rebuilding power for working families. Sweeney said the union movement's greatest victories—such as defeat of paycheck deduction schemes and election of working-family-friendly lawmakers—occurred when many unions joined forces at the state and local levels.

On May 19, some 500 New York union leaders from 52 international unions began to turn this vision into reality with a conference to map out just how a New Alliance would work. North Carolina and Maryland/D.C. will begin implementing the New Alliance this year. The success of New York's and North Carolina's kickoff meetings doesn't diminish the hard work and challenge that a major change effort like the New Alliance brings: Leaders from local unions, central labor councils and state federations made commitments to participate in an Ohio conference, but not all major unions were ready to participate and the Ohio conference was postponed. Plans continue to develop new strategies for bringing together all unions in Ohio around the New Alliance.

North Carolina union leaders held their New Alliance drafting conference June 20 at the Teamsters Local 391 Raleigh meeting hall. "People are enthusiastic, engaged and excited," said James Andrews, state federation president. "We talked about what a strong, unified union movement means, and people believe we are

**Joining forces:** By coming together, New York City union members stopped Mayor Rudy Giuliani from voucherizing public education and slashing social services.



MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY

**Unifying unions: James Andrews, North Carolina state federation president, says union members are "enthusiastic" about the New Alliance.**

going to build on that." Steve Hearn, president of the Flight Attendants, US Airways unit, told union leaders that solidarity made the difference when members were bracing for a possible lockout over stalled contract negotiations last spring. The Charlotte Labor Council mobilized union members for a late night rally—and when the sun came up, the Flight Attendants had a strong contract. "I used to think, 'We're flight attendants and they are labor,'" Hearn said. "Boy, was I wrong. Getting support from other unions made me see that."

In New York, unionists shared examples of how cooperation has helped them win important victories for working families. UAW Local 1326 member Linda Smith, president of the Mid-State Central Labor Council in Ithaca, said the support her union got from other locals during a lockout at the Pall Corp. filtration plant in 1989 was key to securing health care benefits.

The labor council enlisted community support for a huge rally across from the plant, "creating a sense of power and solidarity that ultimately led us to victory," Smith said. "Our small local could not have done it alone."

Coordinated solidarity also was a key to success when hospital workers in Westchester organized with the Health & Human Service Employees Union, 1199/SEIU. When union leaders first approached the Westchester-Putnam Counties AFL-CIO Central Labor Body, they were not optimistic about getting support. After all, "what are the firefighters going to do with health care workers?" Minerva Solla, vice president of 1199, recalled thinking.

But after seeing how enthusiastically all types of workers embraced the campaign, she concluded: "Boy, was I wrong." Labor council leaders met with elected officials, urging them to write letters to the CEOs of the hospitals in support of the organizing drive. Those letters and others from 10 union leaders were distributed to workers. After two months of rallies, news conferences and coalitions



building, 1,400 workers at three hospitals—St. John's, Yonkers General and St. Joseph's—won a voice on the job. The workers' "message to management was, 'You are not just fighting a few workers at your facilities—you are fighting a whole movement in your town,'" Solla said at the New York meeting.

By coming together, union members in New York City were able to stop Mayor Rudy Giuliani (R) from voucherizing public education and slashing social services, said Randi Weingarten, president of United Federation of Teachers/AFT. "When limo drivers or hotel workers or store workers need to organize, when teachers want to shore up education, then there has to be a union movement that not only stops what's wrong, but lifts all boats."

Ozzie Lo Verme, an organizer for Teamsters Local 808 in Long Island, looks forward to the day when every labor council has a coordinator for organizing and for political action. "That would help members know they could get their needs met," he said. Jerry Comer, international representative for the Electrical Workers, noted that "where there is a strong labor council, a lot can be done."

At the end of the daylong meeting, the 25 members of the state's New Alliance drafting committee—representing international and local unions, labor councils and state bodies—gathered to begin the nitty-gritty work of reinventing New York's union movement.

"We will have to make difficult decisions together," said Brian McLaughlin, president of the New York City Central Labor Council. "We will have to decide on priorities and invest in them." As Denis Hughes, state federation president, put it, "This movement is about how we will build a structure that will be effective and inclusive."

For more information, visit the New Alliance community at [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com). @

**Street heat: Unions in downtown Charlotte, N.C., rally to support CWA Local 3603 members.**



# Where Will the Next President Stand on Social Security?



AP PHOTO/FILE



AP PHOTO/FILE

**Larry** Lindsey, a key economic adviser to Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush, noted in a May 15 interview that he wouldn't play the stock market with his personal funds. As Lindsey put it: "I hate losing money."

That same day, his boss advocated taking part of the money every working American pays into Social Security to earn guaranteed benefits and putting it into private accounts dependent upon the stock market.

## Workers lose guaranteed benefits under Bush proposal

Bush's scheme would privatize Social Security by diverting between 16 percent and 24 percent of Social Security's payroll tax revenue into privatized, individual accounts.

Diverting funds would require cuts in guaranteed Social Security benefits—29 percent for older workers and 54 percent for workers 30 and younger—according to a study released in June by the non-partisan Century Foundation.

The study notes that even under the best market conditions, returns on the individual accounts would fall far short of making up the reduction in guaranteed benefits. In fact, "the reductions in Social Security benefits for future retirees are so substantial that they raise questions about the viability of protecting benefits for current retirees, older workers, disabled workers and survivors," the report says.

Bush also has said he will consider raising the retirement age; Vice President Al Gore opposes raising the retirement age.

While Bush will subtract from Social Security's guaranteed defined benefits to fund risky private accounts, Gore will leave guaranteed benefits alone and add new "Retirement Savings Plus" accounts on top of promised benefits to boost retirement for low and moderate income families.

Under Gore's plan, working families could contribute a certain portion of their income to the 401(k)-like accounts and the government would match the contribution on a sliding scale; the lower the income, the larger the match. Eligibility for "Retirement Plus Savings" tops off at \$50,000 for a single person and \$100,000 for a couple.

## Bush plan would leave country in debt

For working families, there are other critical differences between the two plans.

Gore will increase benefits for elderly widows and provide family service credits for parents who take time out of the workforce to care for children. Bush has offered no benefit improvements for women and the elderly.

Gore will extend the life of the Social Security trust fund until 2054; Bush will shorten the life of the trust fund by at least 14 years, causing it to run out of money in 2023.

Funding the Bush scheme would leave the country permanently in debt, with public debt equal to \$2.5 trillion in 2012.

Gore will completely pay off the public debt by 2012 and supports setting aside two-thirds of the projected budget surplus to ensure Social Security and Medicare remain strong for our children, grandchildren and beyond. @

# BUSH-WHACKED

*Bush plans to silence working families' voices at the ballot box*

**E**ven as courts and voters reject “paycheck deception” schemes, one of the strongest supporters of silencing working families and their unions is Texas Gov. George W. Bush. The likely Republican presidential candidate has made paycheck deception a key part of what he labels his campaign finance reform plan.

In May, the Washington State Supreme Court upheld the political rights of workers and rejected efforts by working families’ opponents to override union democratic procedures.

In its ruling, the state Supreme Court tossed out the right-wing Evergreen Freedom Foundation’s suit, which would have required the Washington Education Association to obtain separate, annual individual membership authorization to spend funds for political contributions—before the union could receive members’ dues through member-authorized payroll deductions. The ruling was a major defeat for the group and for others that have mounted similar paycheck deception efforts in other states.

Voters in California and Oregon also turned back attempts to silence working families and their unions. In 1998, they said “no” to right-wing attempts for paycheck deception ballot measures. In Nevada, a state court ruled that same year that a proposed paycheck deception scheme violated the First Amendment rights of union members.

At the federal level, Congress in 1998 resoundingly rejected paycheck deception restrictions on workers and their unions by a 246–166 vote in the House and by 54–45 in the Senate.

But court decisions, electoral defeats and legislative failures haven’t discouraged anti-union forces in their fight to remove workers and their unions from the political process. In Oregon, well-funded anti-worker extremists are working for passage this year of state initiatives patterned after California’s Proposition 226.

And if elected this fall, Bush is likely to do all he can to get Congress to pass a paycheck deception bill, says Texas AFL-CIO President Joe Gunn, who has seen Bush use every opportunity to attack working families and their unions during Bush’s two terms as governor.

“He’d make passing paycheck deception the cornerstone of his campaign to try and shut up working families and keep them out of politics,” Gunn says.

issue of the nonpartisan newsletter *Political Finance & Lobby Reporter*. “The theory—or more accurately the dream—is that if a sufficient number of labor members balk against it, labor union political spending will be halted dead in its tracks.”

Bush is bandying about the words “paycheck protection...as if they were a wooden cross capable of fending off a vampire,” Larry Eichel, *Philadelphia Inquirer* political columnist, wrote March 22.

**While Bush seeks to silence workers, his version of campaign finance reform would triple the current individual contribution limits, according to the *National Journal*—a move that would benefit the wealthy at the expense of working families.**

“There will be no true campaign funding reform unless the labor loophole is closed,” Bush said on “Larry King Live” in December. While Bush seeks to silence workers, his version of campaign finance reform would triple the current individual contribution limits, according to the *National Journal* magazine—a move that would benefit the wealthy at the expense of working families.

Gunn says Bush fears the voice of working families and seeks to put a choke-hold on their efforts to support candidates who back quality education and health care, a strong Social Security system and other bread-and-butter issues. Bush recognizes that passage of a nationwide paycheck deception bill effectively would gag the political voices of working families.

“Paycheck protection is really meant to put the squeeze on election-related spending by exposing labor unions to horrendous record-keeping requirements,” wrote editor Edward Zuckerman in the April 26

Bush may wish he could drive a stake through the heart of union members’ activism and silence working families, but working families and their unions are mobilizing people-powered politics to make a difference on Election Day.

Here’s how you can get involved and ensure that workers voices won’t be silenced:

- Be sure your members are registered to vote.
- Find out how to join Labor 2000’s fight for working family candidates by e-mailing [buildingtowin@aflcio.org](mailto:buildingtowin@aflcio.org).
- If you live in Oregon, contact the Oregon AFL-CIO at 503-585-6320 to join the fight against the state’s paycheck deception measure.
- Check out the new “Paycheck Deception” section on the AFL-CIO’s website, [www.aflcio.org/articles/paycheck/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/articles/paycheck/index.htm), for more information. @

—Mike Hall

## Inspiring Local Unions to Get

## CONNECTED

If you're an AFGE Council 220 member in the Social Security Administration and want to check out the new employee rights provisions in your recently ratified contract, log on the Web and go to [www.afgec220.org](http://www.afgec220.org), where you can download a searchable version of the entire four-year pact.

Maybe you're an AFGE District 4 activist looking for some tips on your role as a union representative. Surf on over to [www.kreative.net/dist4](http://www.kreative.net/dist4).

And if you're part of management and are trying to snoop around, heed this warning from the correctional officers at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tallahassee, Fla. (AFGE Local 1570, [www.geocities.com/Local1570](http://www.geocities.com/Local1570)):

"Warning to management: You may not like what you see or read—the truth!"

These are just three examples of websites of the 20 AFGE locals and district councils entered in the union's first website contest. AFGE will announce winners at its August convention.

When AFGE announced it would include websites in its annual newsletter and publications contest, Associate Communications Director Diane Witiak says it had an added benefit: "Several locals launched new websites. It turned out to be a good way to encourage the locals and districts to use some 21st-century communication tools." ☐

## The Play's the Thing

As Oregon theater patrons headed to see Portland Center Stage's production "Gun-shy" last spring, the "playbills" they received told the ongoing tale of a lock-out that began at CF&I Steel in Pueblo, Colo., in 1997, when 1,100 Steelworkers went on strike after the company refused to bargain for an end to mandatory overtime, a voice in work assignments, wage increases and other key issues.

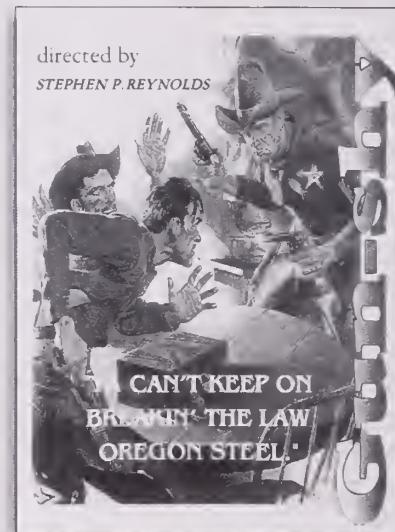
Steelworkers members created and distributed the playbill look-alikes, which described the Steelworkers' lockout in four acts and identified Stephen Reynolds as director of the "tragedy." A member of the board of directors of Portland Center Stage, Reynolds also is a board member of Oregon Steel Mills, the current owner of the Pueblo mill.

The playbill's back page—"Read What the Critics Say"—reproduced newspaper headlines describing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's fining of CF&I \$400,000 for safety violations, including the maiming of a mill worker.

Steelworkers members handed out the playbills to create "community account-

ability," says Paul Bogart, USWA special projects organizer.

"We got a very good response from theatergoers. They understand public accountability is a good thing," Bogart says. ☐



## Now, a Message from SAG/AFTRA

Members of the Screen Actors and Television and Radio Artists on strike against the nation's advertisers got their message for fair pay out on the sea, in the air and over land.

In May, members of SAG and AFTRA showed up during an American Association of Advertising Agencies meeting on the island of Bermuda. As executives took an evening cruise around the island, union members followed them in a fishing boat draped with a banner, "Pay Per Play" and "Fair Contract for SAG/AFTRA." In New York City, the unions rented planes to buzz the airspace with banner ads supporting their efforts to win a fair pay arrangement for commercials that run on network television and the Internet.

On land, the 130,000 SAG and AFTRA members battled one of the nation's military icons, Gen. Colin Powell. Dozens of protesters showed up at Baltimore's Loch Raven Reservoir where Powell was scheduled to film a public service announcement for his America's Promise campaign. Although the unions were sponsors of America's Promise, Powell—whose mother was a union member—refused to honor the SAG/AFTRA picket line. The unions have since canceled their sponsorship.

"Ironically, it was America's Promise that came to SAG, asking us to assist them in gathering support from the entertainment industry for their organization,"

says SAG President William Daniels. "We were impressed with the work General Powell's organization was taking on—targeting the needs of America's at-risk youth and their families. Now, when members of SAG and AFTRA reach out to America's Promise, all they can do is turn their back on the two unions." ☐



Gone fishin': Members of SAG and AFTRA rented a fishing boat to send a message to advertising executives who were cruising the waters off Bermuda during their annual conference.

# No Joke

For "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno, it was no laughing matter when he learned that the Society for Human Resources Management meeting where he was slated to speak also included two seminars on union-busting. Leno, willing to forgo the lucrative speaking fee, refused to take part until the organization dropped the two seminars.

The decision shows that Leno is and always has been a

"stand-up guy" on union issues, the Television and Radio Artists said. ☐



AP/WIDEWORLD PHOTOS

## Building on 'Babygate'

When the news broke in January that Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Jane Swift (R) used state employees to "voluntarily" baby-sit her 14-month-old daughter and commandeered a state helicopter to fly her home to bypass traffic when the baby caught pneumonia, she quickly became a lightning rod for frustrated working parents. Unlike Swift, the state's working families must struggle to balance work and family responsibilities without access to cushy perks. As syndicated columnist Gail Collins won-

dered, "If a lieutenant governor with a partner who stays at home can't manage one baby without help from the office staff, what hope is there for the rest of the world?"

SEIU Local 509, which represents 60,000 state workers, channeled the outrage over Swift's admitted misuse of public resources into action. Union activists are seeking legislation that would provide 12 weeks of unemployment insurance to workers with a newly adopted child or newborn.

The union's efforts built on the political strength union members have generated over the past several years to win improvements for working families.

But when it comes to specific contract proposals, the union is keeping its goals realistic. "We're not going to attempt to bargain helicopter transportation," quips Local 509 President John Templeton. ☐



Sorry: Lt. Gov. Jane Swift apologizes before the media.

## Move Over, EA IE BABIE

There's a new collectible bear in town—and this bear builds union solidarity. Teamsters members who buy tickets to join their union brothers and sisters for the Aug. 19 Dodgers game in Los Angeles will receive a special Teamsters Millennium bear, compliments of IBT Joint Council 42. This is the second year the joint council has made the fuzzy brown giveaway a union-building strategy. An IBT member also will be chosen to sing the



national anthem to open the game that day.

"Our members love it," says Jim Santangelo, Joint Council 42 president and western region vice president. "They are proud to go there as union members. It builds solidarity because people get to meet other members of their union." Last summer, the union set the record—7,000 people—for the largest organized group to attend a Dodgers game. ☐

## UNION LINE Around the Pool & Patio



Some of the hottest products for summertime fun on the patio and in the pool are union made. The following items are made by members of the Steelworkers, UAW and UNITE:

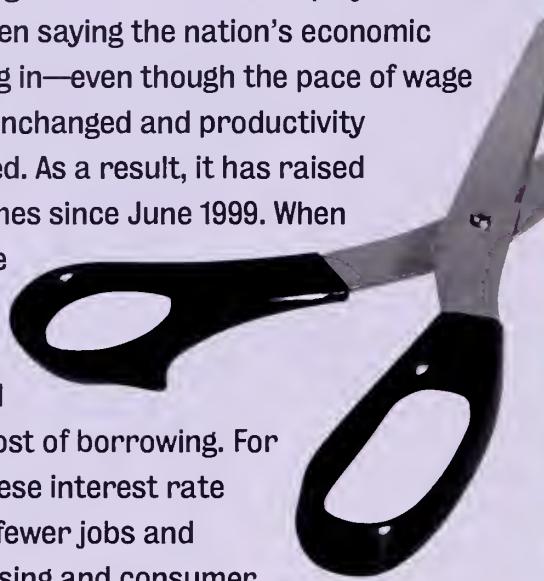
Pool and spa: Clayton & Lambert stainless steel and vinyl in-ground swimming

pools and spas; Jacuzzi swimming pool pumps; DLM Plastics Inc. vinyl pool liners, coping (edging), water bags, PVC pipe and Lok-N-Rok liner lock; S & S Hat Co. vinyl pool liners and covers; Hydrotech pool lights, pumps and heaters; Bergen Point Brass Foundry Inc. swimming pool parts; and Hedstrom and Disney brand beach balls.

Patio: Arden Paradise patio furniture cushion pads; Brown Jordan wrought iron and aluminum patio furniture; Lloyd Flanders wicker patio furniture; Meadowcraft Inc. wrought iron and aluminum patio furniture; Samsonite folding chairs and tables; Hass-Jordan Co. patio and beach umbrellas; Peerless Umbrella Co. patio and beach umbrellas; and Stapo Industries' Raingarde beach, cafe and patio umbrellas. ☐

## When the Federal Reserve Raises Interest Rates, WORKERS PAY

The U.S. Federal Reserve, claiming that inflationary pressures may be building because of low unemployment and rising wages, has been saying the nation's economic growth needs reining in—even though the pace of wage increases remains unchanged and productivity growth has increased. As a result, it has raised interest rates six times since June 1999. When the federal fund rate rises, other interest rates tend to follow, as the federal fund rate sets the cost of borrowing. For average workers, these interest rate hikes translate into fewer jobs and higher costs for housing and consumer loans.



### Higher Mortgage, Less House

7.10%



1999

8.52%



2000

Interest rates on 30-year conventional mortgages have risen from 7.10 percent in May 1999 to 8.52 percent in May 2000. This surge translates into additional interest payments of \$1,780 in the first year of a loan for a family purchasing a home at the median price of \$139,000 with a 10 percent down payment.

Source: Financial Markets Center

### Fewer Jobs for Low-Wage Workers, Minorities

Increased Unemployment, March–June,  
1990–1992



Rising interest rates affect some businesses more than others. Interest-rate-sensitive industries include construction, automobiles and capital goods. Small firms tend to be hit harder than large firms, and low-wage workers and minorities are much more likely to lose their jobs during Fed-engineered slowdowns. During the 1990–1992 recession, which was in part caused by the Fed raising interest rates, unemployment rates rose for all workers, especially African Americans (3.7 percent) and Latinos (4.7 percent).

Sources: Financial Markets Center; BLS Labor Force Statistics from CPS

### Credit Card Interest Payments Rise

previous balance	\$7,300.25
payments and credits	- 300.00
purchases	+ 427.50
cash advances	+ 0.00
balance transfers	+ 0.00
FINANCE CHARGES	+ 93.44
new balance	= \$7,521.19

If the Fed continues to push interest rates up, credit card rates eventually will follow. For example, a 75-basis-point hike would translate into \$12 in additional annual interest payments for cardholders with an average outstanding balance of \$1,600 (a basis point equals one-100th of a percent point).

Source: Financial Markets Center

## EXHIBIT

**La Causa: A History of the United Farm Workers Union**, an eight-panel traveling exhibit of photos, documents and paintings, traces the 36-year struggle of the UFW to

obtain justice and dignity for all workers who toil in the fields. The exhibit will be on display at the George Meany Memorial Archives through October 27. *La Causa* is part of the Detroit Humanities Project, a collaboration involving the Walter P. Reuther Library, LA SED, Casa de Unidad, the Detroit Public Library and the Center for Chicano-Boricua Studies at Wayne State University. Exhibit hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. Closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays. For information, call 301-431-5451. ☐



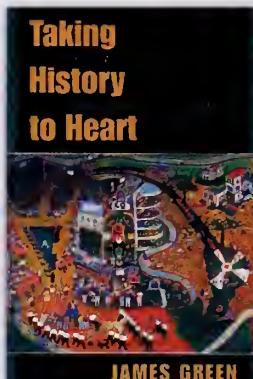
## PUBLICATIONS

**Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of Hope**, by Jonathan Kozol, is the result of years of interaction between the author and children in the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx, one of the nation's poorest areas. Describing his frequent visits with Elio, Pineapple, Raven and other elementary school children at P.S. 30 and St. Ann's Church, Kozol brings to life their childhood years, full of hope, wonder and ingenuity, and

shows how their dreams too often were overrun by circumstances as they grew to adulthood in an environment where nearly 95 percent of families earn less than \$10,000 a year and 75 percent of men are unemployed. Kozol, a former fourth-grade teacher in Boston, decries the city's mismatch of annual funding for schools—\$6,000 per student—compared with \$93,000 per

inmate for prisons. The author opposes public school vouchers because they are "like life boats for a fraction of the population." \$25. Crown Publishing Group, 201 East 50th St., New York, N.Y. 10032; phone: 800-733-3000.

**Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements**, by James Green, examines "social movement history," including the processes that create human solidarity, and blends in personal reflections of his work in discovering, recording and writing about the civil rights movement and other social histories. Green, a professor of history and labor studies at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, describes his involvement in the 1960s with the journal *Radical Americans*, which explored the history and politics of American radicalism. He examines how narratives and oral histories in the civil rights and union movements have contributed to current social movements. His final chapter, "On Becoming a Movement Again," focuses on the resurgence of the U.S. union movement. \$50 clothbound and \$19.95 paperback. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, Mass. 01004. Fax: 800-488-1144; website: [www.umass.edu/umpress](http://www.umass.edu/umpress). ☐



JAMES GREEN

## WEBSIGHTINGS

[www.fedbuzz.com](http://www.fedbuzz.com)—A one-stop site for all federal government agencies, departments and information, accessible through such categories as "Business & Workplace" and "Health & Safety." Includes a kids' page and the GovGoodie bag, a list of government freebies.

[www.osha-slc.gov/dts/osta/oshasoft](http://www.osha-slc.gov/dts/osta/oshasoft)—The Occupational Safety and Health Administration site now offers "OSHA Expert Advisors," a new program covering hazard awareness, fire safety, cadmium, lead exposure and other areas. Visitors can choose to be part of OSHA's software testing in "Public Test Version" areas. Also includes "interactive online advisors" on such topics as logging and respiratory protection.

[www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)—Jointly managed by numerous international trade union organizations, this site lists ongoing international campaigns, global union news and a "What's New" section. By clicking on "About Global Unions," users can access the webpages of most union sponsors.

[www.cwa-union.org/about/local\\_web\\_manual.asp](http://www.cwa-union.org/about/local_web_manual.asp)—The Communications Workers' "Guide to Establishing and Maintaining Local Web Sites" outlines the steps your local union can take to create a successful website. The "how-to" sections include building and structuring a website and the necessity of regularly updating the site. The "Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty" section examines Internet languages and formatting for beginning and advanced users, utilizing sound and video, and setting up bulletin boards and e-mail discussion groups. Also helpful for creating personal webpages. ☐

## Working Women Conference 2000 Highlights



If you didn't get to the Working Women Conference 2000—or if you did and want to share your experience with others—the AFL-CIO has produced a video from the March conference in Chicago. There, 5,000 working women gathered to network, share political mobilization and organizing strategies and join together around common struggles. Speakers include more than one dozen working women, Vice President Al Gore and others. Suitable for union meetings, workshops and related events. Each tape contains a short version (4:19), which provides brief conference highlights, and a longer version (19:48), which features remarks by guest speakers and the results of the Ask a Working Woman survey, in which women overwhelmingly (87 percent) cited equal pay as a top legislative concern. \$6. To order, call the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department at 202-637-5064. ☐

JONATHAN KOZOL



ORDINARY RESURRECTIONS

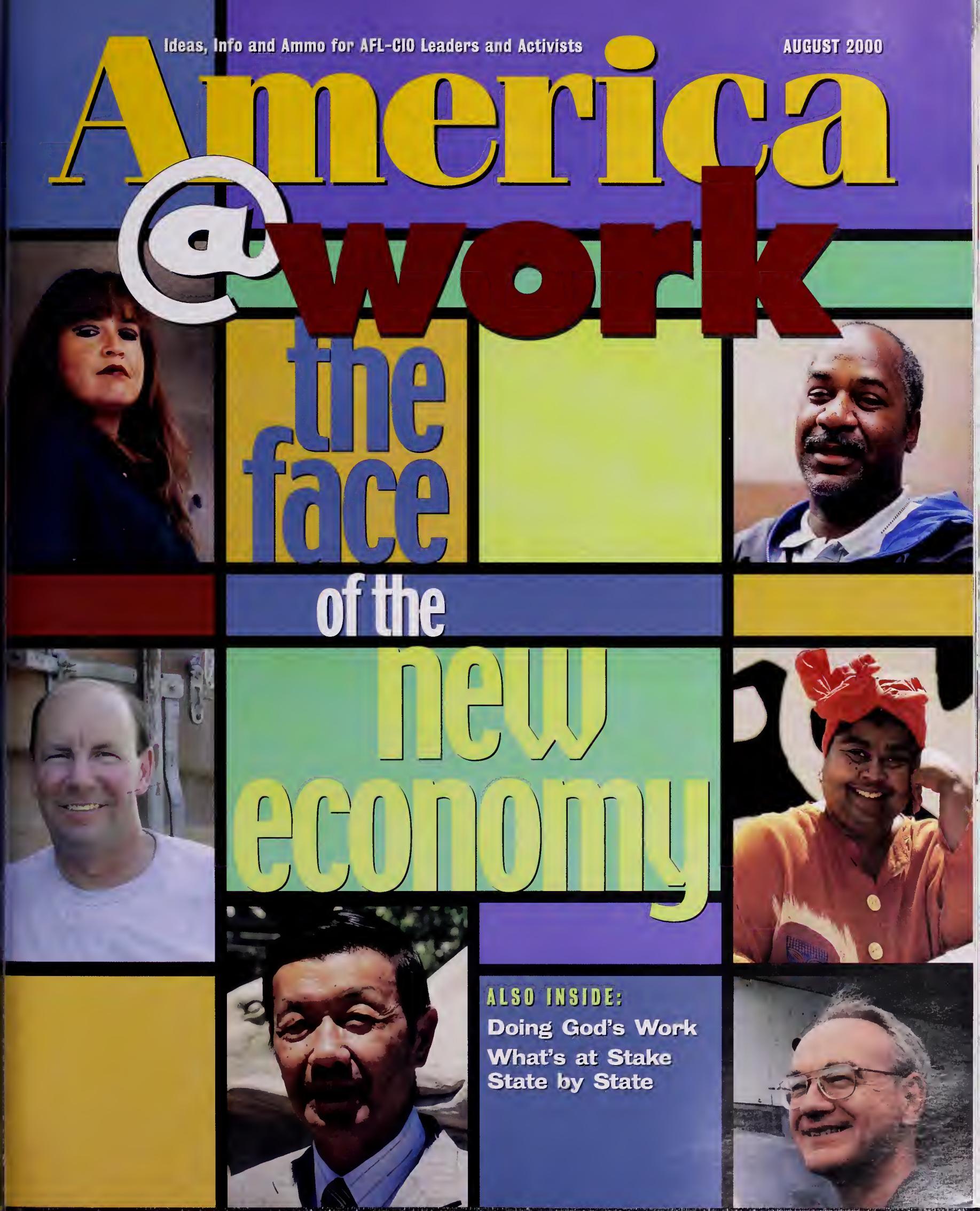
CHILDREN in the YEARS of HOPE

annual funding for schools—\$6,000 per student—compared with \$93,000 per



To involve your union, call 202-637-3967

# America @ work



the  
face

of the

# new economy

**ALSO INSIDE:**

**Doing God's Work**  
**What's at Stake**  
**State by State**



**"THE OPERATING ENGINEERS** is in a dispute with Omni Facility Resources Inc., a facilities maintenance contractor that is slashing wages and benefits of mechanical maintenance workers. The IUOE is asking union members to send an e-mail to Omni CEO Betty Browne at N9886J@aol.com; tell her that her company's actions are disgusting. Send a 'bcc' (blind carbon copy) of your e-mail to jmclaughlin@iuoe.org."

—Joe McLaughlin, IUOE assistant director, Stationary Department, Washington, D.C.

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in *America@work*.

## SAY WHAT?

### What is your union doing to meet the challenges of the changing economy?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue. *America@work*, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: atwork@aflcio.org

## HERE'S WHAT YOU HAD TO SAY ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS REGISTERING VOTERS:

"You'll find enclosed the February/March edition of our AFTCA [AFT Communications Association] Catalyst news service mailed to 800 editors and labor communications members of our voluntary association, all affiliated with the AFT. The AFTCA also will encourage full usage of voter registration cards at our annual conference July 1-2 in Philadelphia and provide the 'Ready! Register! Vote' [a checklist of effective political communications and state-by-state registration deadlines] information to our labor journalists."

—Peter Boespflug, AFTCA president and communications director, New York State United Teachers

[Editor's note: The Catalyst includes a camera-ready, two-sided get-out-the-vote flier that can be customized for distribution to union members.]

**"I HAVE BEEN** a computer software engineer for 16 years and am writing to you about the H1-B visa proposals currently before Congress. Apparently, the AFL-CIO is the only friend working engineers have concerning this issue. The notion that there is a shortage of IT [information technology] professionals is simply a lie. Today, [the industry has] created this notion of a worker shortage. H1-B workers work for 40 percent less pay than Americans and won't quit or complain about their treatment because if they lose their jobs, they face deportation....The H1-B proposals are designed only to artificially hold down wages....I hope that the AFL-CIO will continue to fight for workers who are not necessarily their traditional base....[E]ngineers and IT professionals are the 'new labor' of the 'new economy,' and the potential AFL-CIO expansion into this workforce is limitless."

—Robert W. Turner, Lebanon, Ohio

**"I CANNOT UNDERSTAND** why we (this country) have to spend/waste so much of our tax dollars....Let's try using some of this...money on something beneficial....Maybe we could make living conditions better for our elderly [with] more homes, improved facilities and better food. Perhaps more shuttle buses to take them to large malls...instead of having to ask friends, neighbors or relatives....Think of how many wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches and lift chairs could be offered to them at no charge...."

—Sam Zastudil, retired member, IBEW Local 350, Bellaire, Ohio

## America@work

August 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 8

AFL-CIO Public Affairs Department  
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Washington, D.C. 20006  
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**America@work** (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *America@work*, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

Subscriptions: \$10/year for all issues. Send check to: AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 or order with credit card by calling 800-442-5645.

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## WHAT'S AT STAKE STATE BY STATE

Around the country, working families are mobilizing around critical state and local issues through their state federations, central labor councils and local unions



## On the Road Again

**B**ecause he is a member of the Farm Workers, Texas resident Arister Reyna earns the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. Although he still struggles to support his family, Reyna says he is lucky: Under Gov. George W. Bush, Texas' minimum wage for agricultural workers is \$3.35.

"If I cannot support my family on \$5.15, I cannot understand how farm workers can support their families on \$3.35," he said.

Reyna and other Texas union members traveled to Louisville, Ky., Atlanta, Cincinnati and Cleveland in July, describing the impact of Bush's policies on working families in the state. The union members are part of the AFL-CIO Texas Truth Squad, which launched a nationwide tour in June with its first town hall meeting in Philadelphia.

Texas under Bush ranks at or near the bottom of the

nation in health insurance for children, education benchmarks, environmental protection and pay for teachers and state workers, Truth Squad members pointed out at each stop. More than 600 union members and their families turned out at the UAW Local 10 hall in Doraville, Ga., for a Texas Truth Squad town hall meeting. In Louisville, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka told several hundred union members at IUE Local 761 hall that the Truth Squad was on the road to combat "the tall Texas tales" Bush supporters and the Republican Party will be telling during the presidential campaign.

After the town hall meetings, Trumka and Truth Squad members distributed leaflets about Bush's record to workers, including those at a BellSouth facility in Georgia and at a General Electric plant in Louisville. @



On the record: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka speaks with workers outside a GE facility in Louisville, Ky.

## COUNCIL PASSES BROAD ORGANIZING GOALS



Council action: AFSCME President Gerald McEntee (right) and Painters and Allied Trades President Michael Monroe take part in the council meeting.

**M**eeting in Chicago Aug. 1-3, the AFL-CIO Executive Council approved broad new organizing goals, including a million-members-a-year organizing pace. The four-point plan asks affiliate unions to set higher organizing goals; calls on the council's Organizing Committee to regularly assess the new plan's progress; and urges affiliates to monitor, report and share information on their organizing campaigns.

Council members also adopted a membership information system to boost the participation of local unions in the New Alliance, and committed the AFL-CIO to join with the international union community to hold corporations and governments accountable to the workers' and human rights outlined in the International Labor Organization's Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Council members got an early start Aug. 2 with sunrise visits to worksites around the city where they talked with workers and distributed leaflets exposing Texas Gov. George W. Bush's anti-worker record on such issues as Social Security, education, health care and wages. Members of the Texas Truth

Squad accompanied AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka to a construction site and also joined AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson at the Grand Pier project site.

The council also named Luis Eduardo Garzon, president of Colombia's largest labor federation, winner of the George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award. More than 2,500 Colombian trade unionists have been murdered in the past 15 years, mostly at the hands of paramilitary organizations with the support of government security forces, the council statement explained. Despite the threats, Garzon has been a major figure in the peace process. @



One on one: Sheet Metal Workers President Michael Sullivan and SMWIA Local 67 member Alex Flores (left) leaflet workers in Chicago.

# Latino Actors Stymied by Stereotypes

Persistent stereotyping and lack of understanding of Hispanic social, economic and cultural diversity are key reasons Latinos remain one of the most underrepresented groups in television, movies and other entertainment, according to a recent report by the Screen Actors.

The report, "Still Missing: Latinos In and Out of Hollywood," released May 24, includes the results of one-on-one interviews with top TV and film industry executives who say they think movies and television programs with Latino themes do not succeed financially. Many also said Latino actors are not well-known enough to draw large audiences.

In a mail survey of more than 4,000 Latino SAG members, two-thirds said they had been rejected for a role because they did not fit a Latino stereotype. For copies of the report, call SAG at 323-954-1600. @



**MARY DECHIRICO**  
Roundtable: Reps. Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-Calif.) (center) and Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) listen as AFT member Linda Mook shares her concerns.

## Working Women Say...

**I** am 33 years old, and ever since I was 19, whenever I turned around there was a man getting paid more for the same job," Heidi Huey told Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan (D) and more than 100 others at a July 17 Working Women Say roundtable discussion in Kansas City, Mo.

The Kansas City event and a July 15 forum in Anaheim, Calif., were the first in a series of town hall meetings sponsored by the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department to mobilize and educate women voters and let lawmakers know about the working family issues—equal pay, health care, child care, education—that women are deeply concerned about.

In her first job out of high school, Huey was paid \$4.50 an hour to supervise male pizza cooks making \$5 an hour. "That might not seem like much, but when your paycheck is less than \$200 a week, it's significant," she said.

Bridgette Williams, president of the Kansas City (Mo.) Labor Council, urged women to get out the vote. "The election is not far away and we have a lot at stake, not just for this state, but for the country."

Working Woman Vote forums will continue through the fall. For more information, call 202-637-5064. @

## SPOTLIGHT

### Trades Tackle Temp Agency

RON MILEWSKI/THE BETTER IMAGE STUDIO

Building and construction trades unions launched one of their first big salvos in the campaign against the abuse of workers by temporary employment agencies with a lawsuit against Labor Ready, one of the largest and fastest-growing temp agencies.

The July 19 lawsuit charges that Labor Ready skims money from workers' pay in Georgia, in violation of state law. Labor Ready, which attracts employees with the slogan "Work Today, Paid Today," charges workers an average of \$1.50 to withdraw their daily pay from the company's cash-dispensing machines. Last year, the practice generated \$7.7 million in revenue for the company.

"These cash machines are just one way that temp workers are cheated," says Edward Sullivan, president of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. "Temp workers often are not paid the right hours, are exposed to workplace hazards, receive inadequate training and are denied a voice at work."

The lawsuits were supported by the BCTD's "Temp Workers Deserve a Permanent Voice@Work" campaign, launched in April, and the Atlanta/North Georgia Building and Construction Trades Council on behalf of all past and present Labor Ready employees.

"Employers who ignore the law, and more importantly ignore the fundamental right of workers to bring home a living wage, must be held accountable," says LIUNA President Terence O'Sullivan. "Our union is committed to seeing that all workers get the respect, the dignity and the wages they deserve."

If it loses the lawsuit, Labor Ready could be forced to pay workers the lost wages plus \$10 per person for each time the machine was used.

Delegates to the BCTD's July convention in Chicago unanimously elected Sullivan president and Joseph Maloney secretary-treasurer and agreed to run coordinated organizing programs, like the national temp campaign, whenever possible. @



**A permanent voice:** BCTD President Edward Sullivan (left) and Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Maloney at the recent BCTD convention.

# APALA Boosts Organizing Support

The Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance's Campaign for Worker Justice, launched last year, already has played a key role in voice-at-work campaigns around the country, including the successful multiunion organizing drive at the San Francisco airport, where the workforce is 85 percent Filipino.

As part of the AFL-CIO's 7 Days in June, APALA mobilized key leaders of the San Francisco Filipino American community to join AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson and union activists

in a June 12 walk-through at the airport to show support for workers seeking a voice at work. The action, which took place on Filipino Independence Day, ended at the offices of Argenbright, one of the subcontractors at the airport, where the Filipino leaders sang pro-democracy songs in Tagalog, the most widely spoken language of the Philippines.

Workers voted for SEIU and the Teamsters two weeks later.

"Through APALA's Campaign for Worker Justice, our chapters are building coalitions with community-based organi-

zations, supporting union organizing efforts—truly advancing unions' efforts to improve the quality of life for working families," says APALA Second Vice President Luisa Blue, organizing director of SEIU Local 790.

The AFL-CIO's six constituency groups provide a

bridge to diverse communities, creating and strengthening partnerships with all workers and their families. For more information on APALA and other AFL-CIO constituency groups, visit [www.aflcio.org/unionandbridge.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/unionandbridge.htm). ☐



Standing together: AFL-CIO Executive President Linda Chavez-Thompson (far right) joins APALA members rallying in solidarity with workers at San Francisco airport.

## David Hyde Pierce Speaks Out

David Hyde Pierce, co-star of the television sit-com "Frasier," has been an active participant in the strike by Screen Actors and Television and Radio Artists against the advertising industry. Pierce wrote the following for America@work.

**W**hat's angering actors in the SAG/AFTRA commercials strike is the sense that management wants to have it both ways.

"On the one hand, advertisers come to the bargaining table crying poverty—asking for rollbacks in network payments, minimal increases in cable residuals and refusing to negotiate Internet commercials.

"On the other hand, *Advertising Age* reports 'upfront' network ad sales will rise 10 percent to 15 percent above the \$7 billion achieved last year; cable sales will rise 31 percent, to \$5 billion; cash-barter sales from syndication may reach \$6 billion.

"*The New York Times* quotes the president of the American Association of Advertising Agencies as saying, 'Business has never been better. It's as good a year as I can remember.'

"It has not been a good year for the rank-and-file SAG/AFTRA members who depend on their commercial income to get by. Their performances helped make those enormous corporate profits possible, and although these actors can't afford to be out of work, the strike is the only way they have to tell management, 'You can't have it both ways.'"

For more information, visit: [www.aftra.org](http://www.aftra.org) and [www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org). ☐

David Hyde Pierce



## Master of Union Studies

**T**wenty union activists capped three years of difficult academic work when they graduated with master of science in labor studies degrees from the University of Massachusetts in May.

The university's union leadership and administration program, offered in partnership with the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring,

Md., is tailored to the needs of full-time workers. Students attend 10-day, in-residence sessions held twice a year at the university's Amherst campus. During each on-campus session, students take two three-credit courses and com-

plete a research and writing assignment after returning home. The graduates, representing more than a dozen unions, are among more than 100 union officers, staff and activists enrolled in the program.

"This is a very worker-friendly program," says B. Jeff Francis, who received a master's degree.

Francis, secretary-treasurer of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1995 in Nashville, Tenn., says: "We can't rely on how we did things in the past, because corporate America isn't."

For information on the UMass master's degree program, phone: 413-545-4875; fax: 413-545-0110; e-mail: [bberry@lrc.umass.edu](mailto:bberry@lrc.umass.edu); or visit the website at [www.umass.edu/lrc](http://www.umass.edu/lrc). ☐

# Smooth Sailing Against Toxic Waste

**B**uilding on the "spirit of Seattle"—last November's multicoalition protest of World Trade Organization policies—union members joined with environmental and student groups to prevent 14 containers carrying 110 tons of PCB-laden toxic waste from being unloaded and stored at the Port of Seattle. A three-day standoff in early April convinced the U.S. Department of Defense that its cargo of electrical transformers, oil, rags and other debris contaminated with cancer-causing PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, from U.S. Army bases in Japan was not welcome—even with approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Longshore and Warehouse Union members refused to unload what members called "hot" cargo from the container ship Wan He, operated by the China Ocean Shipping Co. Teamsters Local 174 members backed them up, saying they would not transport the material on land. The cargo originally was shipped to Vancouver, British Columbia, by the Alabama-based Trans-Cycle Industries, destined for a disposal facility in Ontario. British Columbia officials barred the cargo's unloading, so it was re-routed to Seattle.

Joining the workers, the Sierra Club and the Asia Pacific Environmental Exchange threatened to sue if the waste was unloaded, while members of Students for Economic Democracy joined workers protesting on the docks. As a result of the groups' efforts, Washington Gov. Gary Locke (D) and Democratic U.S. Reps. Jim McDermott, Jay Inslee and Norm Dicks met with DOD and EPA officials, eventually convincing the Defense Department to return the cargo temporarily to Japan—where it was met by members of a union-environmental coalition protesting the ship's arrival in Yokohama. ☐

## Never Give Up

**H**undreds of locked-out Detroit newspaper workers and union members rallied July 13 to mark the fifth anniversary of the strike against the *Free Press*, owned by Knight Ridder, and the *Detroit News*, owned by Gannett. The unions representing the workers plan to appeal a recent ruling by a three-judge U.S. Appeals Court panel, which overturned a National Labor Relations Board finding that the newspapers committed unfair labor practices. "This conservative panel of judges threw out a bipartisan decision by the NLRB in favor of two media companies that buy ink by the tanker load," says Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO President Donald Boggs. ☐

JIM WEST

## OUT FRONT

**G**ov. George W. Bush did America a great favor by making Richard Cheney his first appointment. Selecting Cheney as his running mate tells us exactly where working families would rate in a Bush administration—notwithstanding that "compassionate conservatism" rhetoric. It also indicates what kind of folks Bush likely would appoint to other high offices, including the Supreme Court.

The record of Cheney's votes on working family issues during his 1979–1989 stint as a congressman from Wyoming is stunningly bad. Of 157 votes on key working family issues, Cheney voted right just nine times—scoring a whopping 6 percent lifetime record.

Cheney voted against expanding childhood immunization, Head Start, Buy America and prevailing-wage provisions, Older Americans Act funding, anti-apartheid sanctions for South Africa, a resolution calling for Nelson Mandela's freedom and civil rights protections. He voted for raising the Social Security retirement age and Medicare cuts, and declared in 1994, "I don't believe there is a crisis in our health care system."

Not for him there isn't. The more than \$9.3 million in salary and stock options (not including another \$13.5 million in unexercised stock options) Cheney picked up last year as head of Halliburton Inc., a Texas oil services company, could have bought health insurance for 4,553 uninsured workers, according to the AFL-CIO Executive PayWatch website (<http://www.aflcio.org/paywatch>).

What does Cheney say about his voting record? "I am proud of my voting record [although] I could probably find some I would tweak." Tweak!

What do others say about it? "Cheney's voting record was more conservative than mine," Newt Gingrich told *The Washington Times*. He's right: Gingrich earned a 9 percent lifetime record on working family issues. And *Business Week* says while in the House, Cheney "chalked up a conservative voting record that rivaled Sen. Jesse Helms." Right again: Helms has a 10 percent lifetime voting record on our issues.

You can see the complete record of Cheney's votes on the Internet at [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/news\\_cheney.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/news_cheney.htm). As you look it over, think about who our next secretary of labor, housing, health or education would be with Bush in the White House. Think about what a Supreme Court stacked by Bush—who already says his court favorites are Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas—could do to this country. It's possible the next president could appoint as many as four Supreme Court justices. Apply Cheney's voting record to future Supreme Court decisions and say goodbye to decades of progress for working people and the core values of our Constitution.

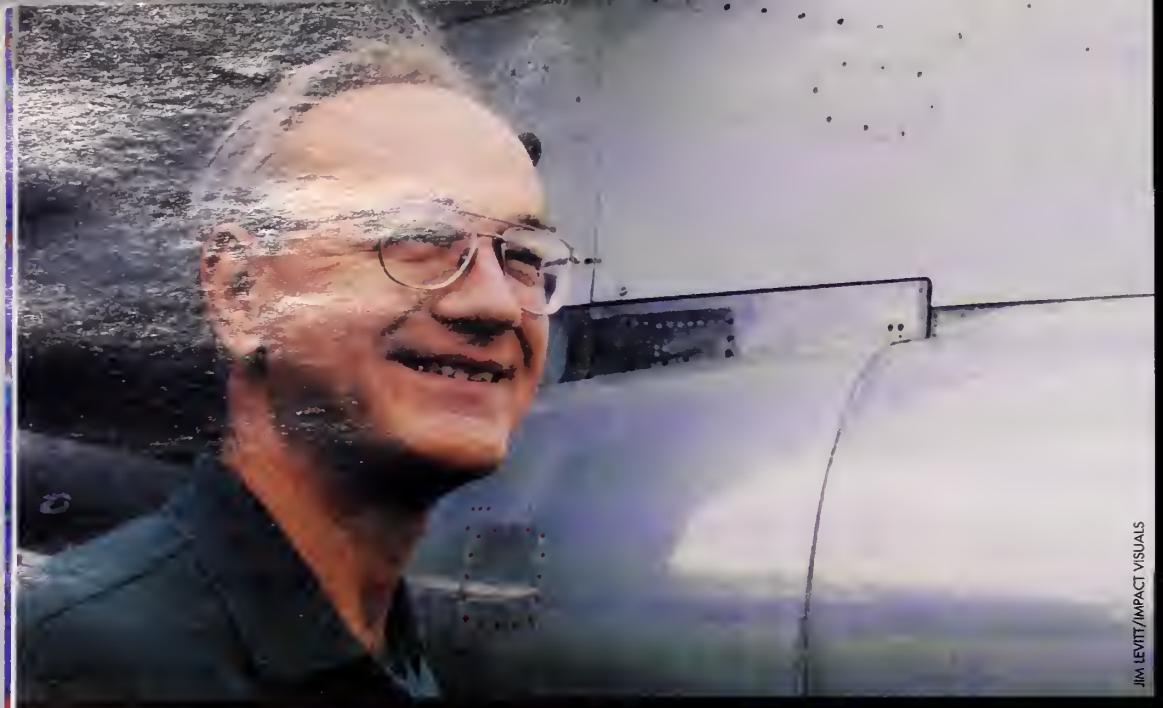
Dick Cheney will inspire us all to get out there, register working family households to vote, educate our members and get them to the polls. Thanks, Dick. Thanks, George. ☐

## Cheney: The Wrong Choice for Working Families

BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



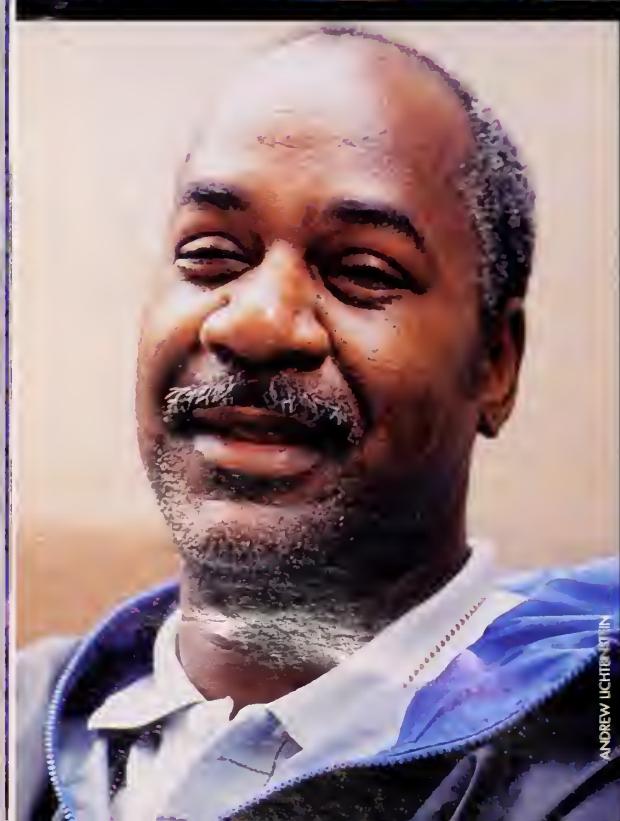
RON LEVIT/IMPACT VISUALS



PAUL MYERS/IMPACT VISUALS

# the face of the new economy

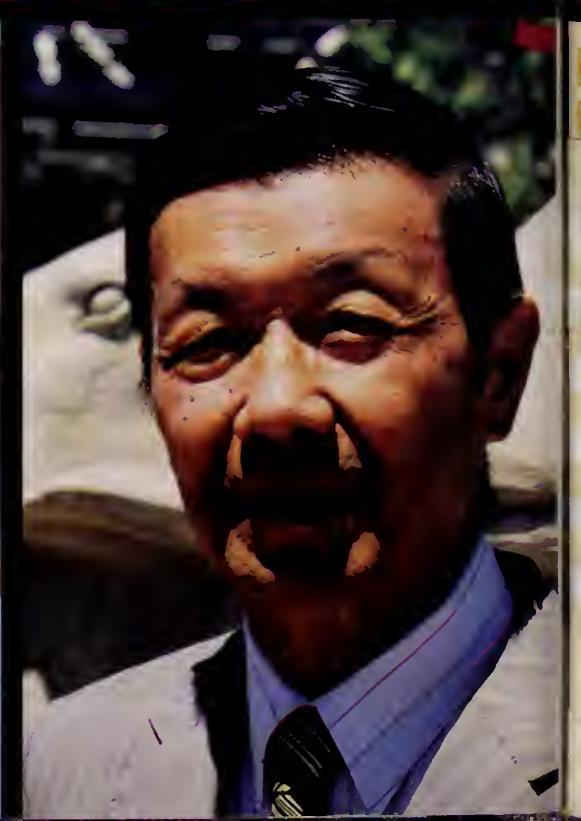
By Jane Birnbaum



ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN



COLLEEN BRADY



COLLEEN BRADY

Dot-com millionaires, information technology specialists and e-business wizards—they're all key players in the nation's new economy. But they are only part of the picture. As profound structural changes take place, a few at the top have benefited tremendously in the new American economy, while more and more workers find themselves trapped in low-skill, low-paying jobs. So, while the booming economy has begun to raise incomes for many, those left behind are more than the rare exception. And

declining security and benefits are more reminiscent of the unpredictable past than of a future in which all workers sail on a surge of unbridled prosperity.

"In the last decade there has been a powerful shift toward individual families having to carry more risk, such as working without benefits," says Elizabeth Warren, Harvard University law professor and co-author of *The Fragile Middle Class*. "Now, it's let each family ride in their own boat—and too bad if it tips over and they drown."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, half of the dozen occupations

expected to grow most by 2008 pay poverty wages or less for a family of four. More janitors than lawyers will be needed, more personal care aides than marketing executives. In a 1999 AFL-CIO survey of young workers ages 18 to 34, 55 percent agreed the new economy is producing "mainly lower-paying jobs."

Half of the nonfarm jobs created between 1992 and 1997 were service jobs, the federal Census Bureau reported this summer. Some service jobs in communications, for example, indeed demand high skills and offer high pay. But the portion of all jobs

paying less than 125 percent of the poverty level rose from 36 percent in 1973 to 42.7 percent in 1997, and experts say technology continues to lower the skill level many other jobs require—grocery store cashiers with scanners no longer need to remember prices, for instance. A recent study by the Conference Board research group found low-skill workers in the late 1990s as likely to slip into poverty as they were in the 1980s, and likelier than in the 1970s.

Another group battling gravity in the hourglass economy is contingent or "non-standard" workers, including independent contractors and temporary workers. Estimates of the contingent workforce range from 5 percent of all workers, according to the BLS, to nearly 30 percent, according to the nonprofit Economic Policy Institute. Some temps prefer the flexibility of contingent work, but many take it out of necessity and often are paid less, are more stressed and lack access to important benefits, workplace protections and training programs, says David West, director of the advocacy organization Center for a Changing Workplace.

Bombarded by changes as far-reaching as those of the last industrial revolution, American workers—low-wage and high-tech—urgently need a voice on the job, and unions are reaching out with solutions. In California's Silicon Valley, for example, where housing costs and the percentage of temp workers are exceptionally high, Working Partnerships Staffing Service USA, launched by the Labor Council of South Bay, offers clerical, administrative and light industry workers a temp agency that provides training and jobs at higher wages than is typical for other local temp agencies, and with access to benefits.

The new economy is "ruthless, Darwinian, all about dollars," says Charles Bofferding, executive director of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace/International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 2001, the union that successfully fought benefit takeaways this year at Boeing in Seattle. To operate effectively, he says, workers need to speak up for themselves. On the following pages, six profiles illustrate how workers are making their voices heard through unions. ☐

Los Angeles-based Jane Birnbaum writes about business and culture for national publications.



## Half of the dozen occupations expected to add the most jobs by 2008 pay poverty-level wages.

### OCCUPATIONS ADDING THE MOST JOBS

	PROJECTED INCREASE	WEEKLY PAY
1) Systems Analysts	577,000	\$1,008
2) Retail Salespersons	563,000	\$329
3) Cashiers	556,000	\$280
4) General Managers	551,000	\$797
5) Truck Drivers	493,000	\$299
6) Office Clerks	463,000	\$419
7) Registered Nurses	451,000	\$750
8) Computer Support Specialists	439,000	\$983
9) Personal Care and Home Health Aides	333,000	\$321
10) Teaching Assistants	375,000	\$315
11) Janitors, Cleaners and Maids	365,000	\$324
12) Nursing Aides and Orderlies	325,000	\$322

Source: 1999 BLS data; the 1999 poverty line for a family of four is \$327/week.



## Cassandra Butler: Head Start Worker Breaking Through Job Inequality

**A**ccording to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, teaching assistant is among the top 10 occupations expected to add most of the jobs by 2008. One teaching assistant is Cassandra Butler, 54, who works for Head Start, the federally funded preschool program for low-income children. Butler has worked for more than three decades for Head Start and similar programs that serve low-income, inner-city residents.

"Typically, upper management in those programs made a living, while the workers were at poverty level, with no job security," she says. And at Head Start centers, educa-

tion assistants perform the same tasks as the teachers—making lesson plans, serving food, teaching and working one on one with students. So when an organizer from the AFSCME-affiliated Ohio Association of Public School Employees talked with Butler and other Head Start workers two years ago, she was ready to stand up.

For the teaching assistants—who made \$7.40 before joining a union, and whose salary will increase to between \$10 and \$11 an hour by 2003—seeking a voice at work wasn't only about low pay. "There was a total lack of respect on the job," says Butler, who completed three years of college in psychology and sociology. Workers

were rehired annually and could be dismissed with little recourse.

OAPSE Associate Director Gary Martin, who is also an organizer, says many Head Start workers love and believe in the program, which is why they've endured the low pay and poor conditions. "The program has been able to prey on people's emotions," he says. Across the country, such unions as AFSCME and SEIU are working in coalition with community and parent groups to help Head Start and child care workers gain a voice at work. In Philadelphia, for instance, AFSCME affiliate United Child Care Union has launched a multipart organizing campaign to improve the quality of care and jobs, in part by creating an areawide occupational association for child care workers.

Butler was among the core group of six who persuaded her 500 Head Start co-workers—including teachers, mental health and family service workers, food service workers and bus drivers—to form Local 800. "Nobody believed the inequality could be broken because it had endured more than 30 years," says Butler, a single mother and active grandmother. "But we were able to stand toe-to-toe and say, 'This is not fair. We want to be treated like human beings, not chattel.' And to see that come to pass, why, there is nothing in my life that I'm more proud of." ☐

## David Patzwald: Aircraft Electronics Engineer Making the Personal Political

committee this year, it was personal. Boeing was asking engineers for deep cuts in either their medical or life insurance plans. Patzwald, 54, had just finished prostate cancer treatment, and he and his wife, a library assistant, were helping the youngest of their three children through college. His total out-of-pocket cost for treatment was \$200—had the takeaway been imposed, he estimates he would have had to pay about \$12,000.

Patzwald received a letter from a fellow engineer dying of a brain tumor, distraught because he'd been counting on a \$160,000 payment to his family upon his death. The company's life insurance takeaway would have cut that to about \$32,000.

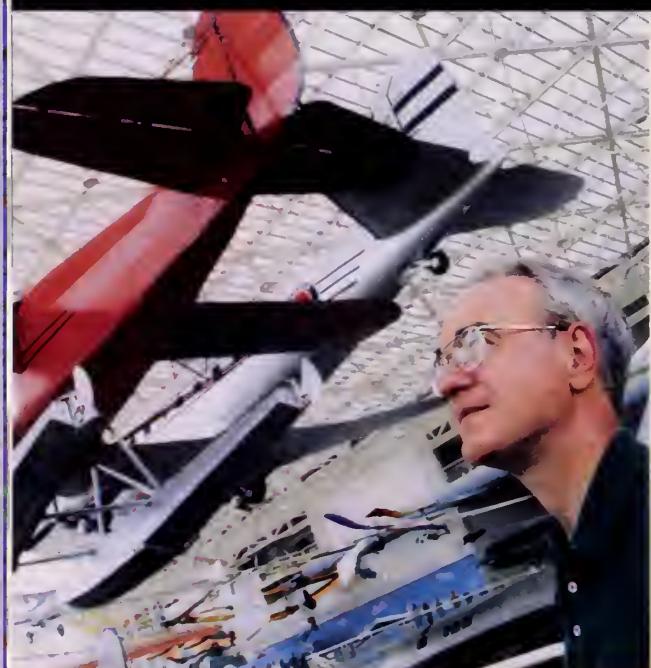
The takeaways threatened union and nonunion engineers alike. Three weeks before they went out on strike, the bargaining unit membership jumped from 41 percent to

65 percent. "We'd been more of a professional group than a union, but most people realized they had to have a voice if they wanted to keep what they had," Patzwald said. On the first day of the nation's largest private-sector, white-collar strike, 80 percent of Patzwald's bargaining unit, including some nonunion members who became picket captains, walked out together at 9 a.m.

To communicate with members and sustain morale throughout the 40-day strike, the engineers turned to the Internet, creating chat groups, e-mail chains and a homepage updated daily. Dozens of engineers kept up the picket line, chanting: "No Nerds, No Birds." Instead of takeaways, engineers won a contract with \$2,500 in incentive bonuses and an 8 percent pay increase in the first year—6 percent for technicians. "We shut down the delivery line," Patzwald says. "It cost the company." ☐

JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

**W**hen Boeing Aircraft electronics engineer David Patzwald, a member of SPEEA/IFPTE, sat on his union's negotiating



# Paul Dodge: Truck Driver Independent in Name Only

**A**ccording to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, truck driving is the nation's fifth-fastest-growing occupation. But if Paul Dodge has a say, the future must be different for independent truck drivers.

For the past 20 years, Dodge has owned a truck and driven as a sole proprietor for trucking companies delivering cargo to and from the Boston pier. In a good year, he nets about \$20,000—from a \$70,000 gross. Yet, \$70,000 is the same figure Dodge grossed in the early 1980s, after his then-employer, facing industry deregulation, announced he could no longer afford to compete unless

the drivers became contractors. Dodge sees now that this huge drop in his household income has everything to do with his status as an independent contractor.

Back then, Dodge chose the independent trucker life because "it seemed glamorous to a young man," he recalls. But today, at 43, with a wife who works full-time so their family can have health insurance, a daughter in college and two teenagers, including one with a serious illness, the glamour is long gone. Truckers like himself are "independent in name only," he says, dependent on the benevolence of the owners of companies that lease their trucks, make their schedules and even charge them for the company logos their trucks must bear—and lack any job protection or health benefits.

Like millions of workers, Dodge is in the contingent or "nonstandard" workforce. Today, three of every 10 workers are in such arrangements. Truck drivers, high-tech temps and even construction workers are part of an employment trend away from long-term, stable employment toward less secure work.

Just as Dodge watched his income plummet when he became an independent con-

tractor, many contingent workers see their wages paid not to them, but to the firm that's contracting their services. According to George Gonos, assistant professor of employment relations at the State University of New York-Potsdam, the temp industry typically charges a markup of between 35 percent and 50 percent on each worker's salary. "Workers largely shoulder these fees, which are an important cause of wage depression and income inequality for temps," says Gonos.

Early this year, Dodge read an article describing a new Teamsters campaign to organize owner-operator truckers serving the nation's piers—and he called up Teamsters Local 25. By March, Dodge was headed for Washington, D.C., to participate in a joint IBT-independent truckers rally to demand a Port Driver Bill of Rights for the nation's 40,000 pier truckers who, because they are independent contractors, can't join unions.

"We're more reliant on company owners than if we were employees used at their discretion, and we have no protection," says Dodge. "Right now, if you tell the company, 'I own that truck, but you're asking me to do something illegal,' they tell you to go home. As Teamsters, we'd truly be independent." ☐



## Maria Duran: Janitor Working for a Better Future

**I**n Silicon Valley, where overnight millionaires join long-established financial moguls, 4,000 janitors waged a successful contract campaign this year for living wages and affordable health care. Years of building support among the community resulted in stunning success: In June, they won annual wage increases of 8 percent for each of three years. The janitors were "cautiously supported" by the *San Jose Mercury-News* editorial board, says San Jose State University political science professor Terry Christensen, because "everybody understands toilets have to be cleaned and the bottom will fall out of the Valley if maintenance workers simply cannot afford to stay here."

One janitor who rallied in Silicon Valley was Maria Duran, 35, a member of SEIU Local 1877. Working the night shift, Duran cleans

an entire floor of an office building that houses the computer technology giant Cisco Systems in Santa Clara. Cisco's CEO, John Chambers, earned \$945,000 in 1999—while exercising \$121 million worth of stock options.

Most nights, Duran sleeps only three-and-a-half hours, rising to see her children, ages 5 and 7, off to school while her assembly worker husband begins his shift. A recent AFL-CIO study of working women found about half of women with children work a

different schedule than their spouses or domestic partners. University-educated Duran, who taught elementary school in Mexico, says the overlapping schedules are necessary so the children always have a parent at home.

As a result of Local 1877's successful negotiations, Duran received a pay raise in June and now earns \$8.74 hourly, which will rise to approximately \$10 in 2002. As extraordinary as the recent increase is to boosting her family income, Duran says it won't allow her family to leave their present San Jose home—a \$600-a-month converted garage with no bathroom facilities, warmed only by a space heater.

"It's important to save for the children's education," Duran explains, "and maybe I can give them better clothing, food and entertainment." ☐



PAUL MYERS/IMPACT VISUALS

# Wayne King: Communications Technician Expanding Opportunities

**B**y day, Wayne King is a communications technician troubleshooting new data network systems at an AT&T facility in lower Manhattan. By night, the 52-year-old Communications Workers of America Local 1150 member, who has put in nearly 30 years at AT&T and holds a master's degree in computer science as well as a bachelor's degree in economics, is once again a student.

King is enrolled in certified computer repair and administration courses, conducted almost entirely online with some hands-on lab work at a new center minutes from his AT&T office. At technical schools, the two courses King takes could cost up to \$4,000, he estimates. But they cost him nothing, because they are offered through CWA and the unions' training

ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN



partnerships with such corporate employers as AT&T.

In the new economy, worker retraining increasingly is critical. According to a 1997 report from the Kellogg Foundation-financed Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners, 75 percent of the current workforce will need significant retraining

over the next decade. "We must continue to develop an economy that encourages high-skill workplaces and makes certain workers have the opportunity and training to master the skills necessary for the jobs of the future," says Morton Bahr, the commission's chairman and CWA president.

Already, the information technology world is changing so rapidly that companies need union involvement to begin to meet their need for workers with up-to-the-minute skills. "The biggest complaint I heard when I got to my current position was they weren't getting trained workers," King recalls.

Last year, King, who currently makes about \$25 an hour, decided to take the training courses to create new personal challenges and heighten his marketability. "You should always have more options," explains King, whose father worked as a garage mechanic and whose mother was a laundry worker. "That's important in this new economy, and anytime, really."

In that regard, the CWA "has really done right" to focus recent efforts on worker retraining, King says. "With new skills, we are building value—for ourselves, the union and the company." ☐

## Tin-Wing Tam: Busperson Simply the Best



DAVID LEE WAITE

**E**very day, Tin-Wing Tam, a busperson at the Excalibur Hotel in Las Vegas, wears a pin studded with three diamonds that says "Simply the Best." Tam received it after he was named employee of the month twice in five years. "People say I look like a general," he chuckles.

After decades as a Hong Kong warehouse manager, Tam, then 59, came to Las Vegas with his son in the early 1990s. Luckily, the Culinary Union Training Center recently had opened. Culinary Workers Local 226 negotiated creation of the center with 30 Las Vegas hotels. Tam was among the first to take its free, 40-hour busperson program.

By training workers in food service, bartending and housekeeping, the center offers a win-win situation: Hotels can recruit much-needed skilled workers, who make between \$9 and \$12 an hour with health and pension benefits.

In 1999, 2,500 workers graduated from the center, more than twice the first year's number, and the mayor of Boston and others have paid visits to learn how to set up their

own programs. "Hotel managers everywhere finally realize the benefit of paying to train the workers they need," says Local 226 Chief Executive Officer Jim Arnold. That training needs to include the gamut of fast-growing jobs, whether high-tech or service.

Tam learned how to set a table, interact with customers and deal with the boss. He feared he wouldn't get a job because of his age—but an Excalibur recruiter signed him up immediately after the program's graduation ceremony, which was attended by hotel representatives. A Local 226 member, Tam makes \$9.10 an hour plus tips and has health and pension benefits.

Tam, who recently saw his son, a gifted violinist, graduate with honors in biochemistry from the University of California at Berkeley, says without the training program, he wouldn't have gotten a well-paying, secure job. "It's good to be in a union because you have someone who speaks for you." Tam also appreciates his employer. "I love the Excalibur," he says. "They don't care that I'm 69. I got the lifetime achievement award because I am working hard all the time." ☐

# Fast Facts

## on Workers and the New Economy

### More and More Workers Are Temporary or 'Contingent'

- Nearly three working Americans in 10 are employed in temporary, contingent or non-standard jobs.
- Two-thirds of American firms plan to expand their contingent staff in the next five years. Nearly all American firms (93 percent) say they hire contingent workers, and half (49 percent) use more such workers now than in 1996.

SOURCES: "Contingent Workers Fight for Fairness," National Alliance for Fair Employment, May 23, 2000, [www.fairjobs.org](http://www.fairjobs.org); "Nearly all American firms....'Need for Talent and Flexibility, Not Cost Savings, Drive Hiring of Contingent Workers," American Management Association, June 18, 2000

### Young Workers See Dead-End Jobs Ahead

- Fully three-quarters of young workers do not have college degrees. They are far less likely than young college graduates to have full-time, permanent jobs or earn more than \$20,000 a year.
- A 55 percent to 29 percent majority of young workers say their employment opportunities are mostly low-paying jobs that offer no benefits.
- Over the past decade, the proportion of young adults without health coverage has risen from 22 percent to 30 percent, despite tight labor markets.
- Most workers between the ages of 25 and 29 say employers fall short when it comes to sharing profits with employees (62 percent), offering policies that help working families (61 percent) and providing cost-of-living raises (58 percent).
- Given the chance, 54 percent of young workers say they definitely or probably would vote for a union.

SOURCES: "High Hopes, Little Trust: A Study of Young Workers and Their Ups and Downs in the New Economy," AFL-CIO, September 1999, [www.ofcio.org/articles/high\\_hopes/index.htm](http://www.ofcio.org/articles/high_hopes/index.htm). Proportion...without health coverage: "On Their Own: Young Adults Living Without Health Insurance," The Commonwealth Fund, May 2000, [www.cmwf.org/programs/insurance/quinn\\_yo\\_bn\\_391.asp](http://www.cmwf.org/programs/insurance/quinn_yo_bn_391.asp)

### Income Inequality Is Growing in Nearly Every State

- Despite strong economic growth and tight labor markets, income disparities in most states are significantly greater in the late 1990s than they were during the 1980s.
- In 45 states, the gap between the average incomes of middle-income families and of the richest 20 percent of families expanded between the late 1970s and the late 1990s.

SOURCE: "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Economic Policy Institute, Jan. 18, 2000, [www.cbpp.org/1-18-00stp.htm](http://www.cbpp.org/1-18-00stp.htm)

### Working Families in Low-Wage Jobs Can't Make Ends Meet

- Few jobs in the low-wage sector of the economy provide the pay and benefits that would enable working families to meet their basic needs.
- The budget needs of a three-person family (one adult with two children) range from \$20,000 to \$40,000 (in 1996 dollars)—far above the poverty threshold for a family of four (\$12,636).

SOURCE: "How Much Is Enough?" Economic Policy Institute, May 2000, [www.epinet.org/books/howmuch.html](http://www.epinet.org/books/howmuch.html)

### Families Depend on Working Women

- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of working women say they provide about half or more of their household's income.
- Nearly half of all women who are married or living with someone (46 percent) say they work a different schedule than their spouses or partners do. Among married women with young children, the figure rises to 51 percent.
- Equal pay, high-quality and affordable health care, paid family leave and pensions and Social Security top working women's legislative priority list.

SOURCE: "Ask a Working Woman: A Report on the National Survey" from the Working Women's Department of the AFL-CIO, March 2000, [www.ofcio.org/women/survey1.htm](http://www.ofcio.org/women/survey1.htm)

### Minority Workers Face Even Tougher Times

- Young Latino workers are more likely than other workers to hold jobs that pay less than \$20,000 a year (52 percent to 41 percent) and less likely than other workers to have employer-provided health insurance (39 percent to 45 percent).
- People of color are disproportionately employed in contingent jobs with low wages—some 22 percent of the overall public but 31 percent of minorities say they worked during the previous 10 years as part-time, temporary or contract employees when they would have preferred a standard job.
- Quality, affordable health care is among all women's legislative priorities, especially for Asian American women (91 percent), Latino women (89 percent) and African American women (85 percent).

SOURCES: "High Hopes, Little Trust: A Study of Young Workers and Their Ups and Downs in the New Economy," AFL-CIO, September 1999, [www.ofcio.org/articles/high\\_hopes/index.htm](http://www.ofcio.org/articles/high_hopes/index.htm); "Contingent Workers Fight for Fairness," National Alliance for Fair Employment, May 23, 2000, [www.fairjobs.org](http://www.fairjobs.org); "Ask a Working Woman: A Report on the National Survey" from the Working Women's Department of the AFL-CIO, March 2000, [www.ofcio.org/women/survey1.htm](http://www.ofcio.org/women/survey1.htm)

# DOING GOOD

BY JAMES B. PARKS

## Seminary Summer offers future religious leaders a chance to practice what they preach

**P**aul Graham's days start around 4 a.m. By 5, he's in the hiring hall of one of Chicago's many day laborer agencies, filling out an application, taking drug tests and waiting for hours to see if he will be sent out on a job that might pay a bit more than the minimum wage.

While he waits, Graham talks with some of the 30,000 mostly Latino and African American men and women day laborers in Chicago, many of them homeless. He hears stories of discrimination and intimidation: dispatchers who prefer to send Latinos to job sites because they think they may not have green cards and are therefore easier to "control." Or about paychecks eaten away by employer deductions for transportation to the job—for those lucky enough to get a job. Then Graham talks to the workers about joining a union, saying, "You can't win one-on-one—you need to address employers as a group."

Spending weeks in the world of a day laborer is not what Graham, 26, imagined he would be doing as he was growing up 30 miles outside Chicago in suburban Lisle, Ill. "It was a different world," he says. "It wasn't until I was a teenager working alongside Latinos and African Americans who would come out to the suburbs to work did I find out what social injustice was."

Graham, a student at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, is working with the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues and meeting with day laborers as part of Seminary Summer, an internship for future religious leaders launched this year by the AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Expanding on the success of the AFL-CIO Union Summer program, Seminary Summer provides 23 seminarians, rabbinical students and other future religious leaders the chance to spend 10 weeks taking part in campaigns for workplace justice. After an initial one-



DAVID BACON

week training in early June, the seminarians fanned out to 14 cities across the country to work with unions on organizing campaigns or first-contract efforts and to help build alliances among religious, community and union activists to support workers in their fight for a voice at work.

Seminary Summer could be key—along with the Labor in the Pulpits program, co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO and the NICWJ—to rebuilding the once strong links between religion and the union movement by creating opportunities for both sides to work together and to explore their common



VIRGINIA BLAISDELL

# D'S WORK

## ITCHELL

goals, says Kim Bobo, executive director of NICWJ. Those links were weakened in the 1960s and 1970s, creating an entire generation of religious leaders who have little contact with the union movement. But as the union leaders seek more community allies, they are finding that some religious groups are natural partners in the struggle for social justice. "Every religion talks about tying your faith to good works and your good works to faith," Bobo says, "and the movement for workplace justice is a perfect way to bring both of those pieces together."

### The road to Seminary Summer

Many Seminary Summer participants have been active in workers' issues, such as the anti-sweatshop movement, that led them to union organizing. Daniel Smokler's mother was an organizer among migrant workers in Michigan in the 1960s. But the 21-year-old Yale student, who plans to become a rabbi, did not think about unions until he took part in a sit-in at Yale over the school's policies on university logo products made by workers in sweatshops in developing countries. He filled out his application for Seminary Summer during the demonstration.

Smokler's Seminary Summer project involves coalition-building with the New Haven religious community and the Community Labor Project, a coalition of HERE locals 34, 35 and 217 and SEIU District 1199. By taking part in the campaign to support workers at the Omni Hotel, Smokler says he now has the opportunity to blend his faith with his passion for justice.

Rachel Cornwell, 26, thought she knew about union organizing after working on Capitol Hill and being involved in international sweatshop issues.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

### Coming Labor Day Weekend...

**Labor in the Pulpits**, a joint effort of the AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Through Labor in the Pulpits, union leaders take part in their congregation's services as guest speakers to talk about the connection between faith, work and the union movement.

Last year, union speakers addressed an estimated 100,000 worshippers at more than 600 services in 450 congregations in 38 states and more than 80 cities—more than double the number that participated the year before.

If your congregation or labor council is interested in sponsoring Labor in the Pulpits, order a copy of the updated *Labor in the Pulpits Labor Day 2000 Organizing Kit and Worship Resources* by contacting the AFL-CIO at 202-637-5280; fax: 202-637-5012; or NICWJ at 773-728-8400; fax 773-728-8409. Key portions of the kit are available at [www.aflcio.org/laborinthepulpits/resources.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/laborinthepulpits/resources.htm). ☐

# PAUL GRAHAM



VIRGINIA BLAISDELL

support when classes resume in the fall. Her days are filled with leafleting, visiting clergy, e-mailing students and faculty and sending postcards. Her evenings often are long as she and the SEIU organizers plan strategy. Even though it's hard work, Cornwell, a United Methodist Church member studying at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, says she enjoys it. "It's really exciting to see the workers get empowered. I think I might have a call to be an organizer."

The program also has raised participants' awareness of how hard it can be for workers to form a union and the role that congregations can play in helping workers gain justice. "It's not just about praying and preaching," says Brenita Mitchell, a Seminary Summer participant. Mitchell is working with AFSCME Local 3299 in Oakland, Calif., to organize workers at the University of California. "It's about making the commitment to do what needs to be done and having faith that, no matter how hard it gets, right will prevail."

**Organizing:** Paul Graham (seated, center) is working with day laborers in Chicago.

But organizing janitors with SEIU Local 82 at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., "is much more difficult than I expected. There are a lot of negative messages coming out of the university. The school is trying to shift the blame for what's happening to the union."

A majority of the university's janitors have signed union cards, but the university refuses to recognize the union or to negotiate. Cornwell is seeking to mobilize students, faculty and religious leaders during the summer so janitors will have a base of

Mitchell, 49, saw firsthand the potential power of a coalition of congregations and unions during a mediation session at a Monterey company at which five workers had asked for union help in dealing with an abusive manager.

The workers made their case, yet management still was unprepared to improve working conditions, she says. But when Mitchell spoke up near the end of the session about the need to heal wounds and come together, "it was like I represented the whole religious community—and they listened." A former social worker and community organizer who now is a student at New Brunswick (N.J.) Theological School, Mitchell says the experience showed her that unions can make a big difference.

## Bringing religion back into the union fold

Seminary Summer participants say their experience has given them a new determination to create ways for the religious and union movements to bring about social justice together.

"When I look at the problems of the inner city, I see that all of them are related to poverty," says Mitchell. "And you ask yourself, Where are the churches?"

Antonio Nilson Camelo, a native of Brazil and a member of the Camboni Missionaries, hopes his summer spent organizing poultry workers with United Food and Commercial Workers Local 2008 in Arkansas will teach him skills he can take home to help the poor.

"The church needs to have a dialogue with workers," says Camelo, 32, who chose to attend Catholic Theological Union in Chicago rather than follow his father into farming. "This work ought to be part of our ministry, because whatever we do to improve the lives of workers, I believe, is part of God's plan. It's important to struggle with those who need our help."

It all boils down to how one sees the role of organized religion, Graham says. "One of the day laborers took me to a prayer service at the homeless shelter where he lived," he says. "The minister there told the folks 'You people are sinners and you need to repent before things will get better.' Then I went to an organizing meeting with some of the same people at the prayer service, and the message was one of empowerment and hope. Which is the most Godlike way of treating people?"

## International Union Summer

Four veterans of the AFL-CIO's 1999 Union Summer program became the first group to take part in International Summer, a one-month global version of Union Summer launched this year.

"I'm in it for the justice," says Maro Sevastopoulos, a graduate of Bard College, who was assigned to South Africa after working last summer with the Farm Workers in California. In South Africa, Sevastopoulos worked with trade unions on issues of gender and the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS.

Aldo Mercado, the son of Mexican immigrants, says he is the first in his family "who does not work in the tomato fields." After spending his Union Summer organizing day care workers in Chicago last year, the graduate of the University of California-Santa Cruz this year journeyed to the Philippines, where he organized with teams in the export processing zones.

Ben McKean, a sophomore at Harvard, whetted his appetite for social justice in campus anti-sweatshop campaigns. International Summer affords him an opportunity to help people who live in a country where sweatshops are prevalent, he says. McKean, who worked with the UAW in Detroit during his Union Summer experience last year, traveled to Guatemala to help organize electrical workers at a newly privatized plant.

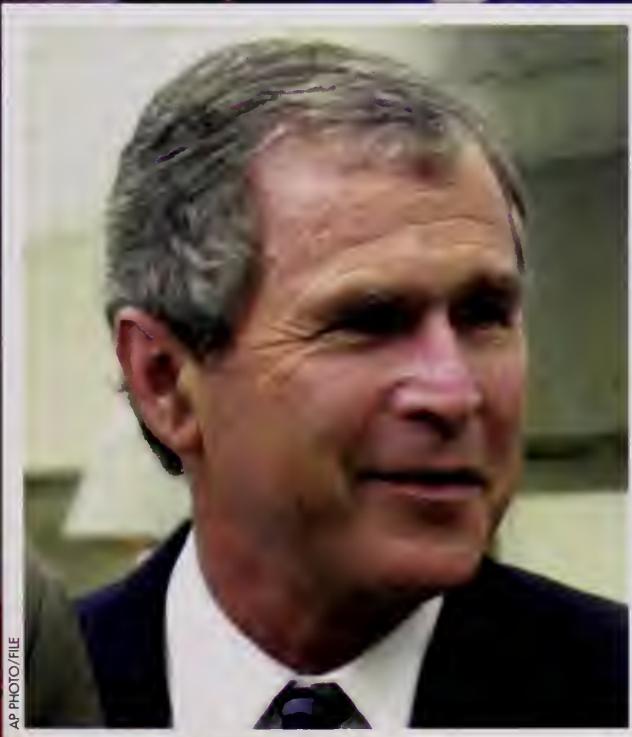
Last year, George Washington University student Daniel Calamuci spent his Union Summer in New York City with the Hotel Trades Council organizing the Rainbow Room restaurant. (The council is made up of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 6, Electrical Workers Local 3, Steelworkers Local 43, Operating Engineers Local 94, Office and Professional Employees Local 153, SEIU Local 758, Painters and Allied Trades Local 1422, Firemen and Oilers Local 56/SEIU and the unaffiliated Hotel, Maintenance, Carpenters, Valet and Allied Trades Local 1.) Calamuci's interest in International Summer was sparked by the protests in Seattle and Washington, D.C., against the policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. He went to Romania to help trade unions on strategies to shape World Bank and IMF practices.

"I want to help energize the union movement," Calamuci says. "If people in other countries are denied their rights, then we're next."

# Where Will the Next President Stand on Education?



CORBIS



AP PHOTO/FILE

The next president will determine whether our public schools have the support necessary to help students reach ever-higher levels of achievement, or whether the progress public schools have made will be jeopardized by misguided policies.

Vice President Al Gore's education record includes fighting for and winning a new federal law to reduce class size and boost teacher staffing by 100,000, even while maintaining standards and accountability. He strongly supports bipartisan legislation to rebuild and modernize the nation's crumbling classrooms.

Although Gov. George W. Bush touts his credentials on education issues, Texas under Bush has lost ground on educational gains made during previous administrations. Texas ranks 46th among the nation's 50 states in college entrance exam scores—a 6-percentage-point drop since Bush took office in 1995—preschool participation ranks 28 percent below the national average and there are 40,000 teacher vacancies. In 1995, Bush cut \$400 million in funding from the teacher retirement system, after promising not to cut funding for the retirement fund in 1994.

Bush's plan for the nation's education problems is to channel taxpayer dollars through vouchers to pay for private school education. Rather than fighting to improve quality in public schools, Bush proposes to give each student in subpar public schools a \$1,500 voucher to attend a private or parochial school.

In addition, Bush proposes turning some \$7.7 billion in funds from the federal Title I program—which has successfully directed aid to disadvantaged students and set accountability standards for school districts since 1965—into no-strings block grants to states. The states could use the funds for programs even for children who are not disadvantaged—or for any other purpose.

Bush opposes bipartisan legislation now in Congress that would rebuild America's deteriorating classrooms, which were built, on average, 42 years ago. The General Accounting Office estimates 14 million schoolchildren attend schools in need of extensive repair.

At the Pioneer School in Ashwaubenon, Wis., a fifth-grader asked Bush in April, "If you were elected president, what steps would you take to ensure more space in children's classrooms?"

"I don't believe the federal government should be building classrooms around the country," he said.

In contrast, Gore, who has been endorsed by the two teachers' unions—the AFT and the National Education Association—has pledged strong support for public schools and backed the School Modernization Act. The act would provide \$3.2 billion in federal tax credits to help school districts to repair, modernize and build the nation's public school facilities. His plan also would provide four times as much funding (\$115 billion over 10 years) for America's students, schools and teachers as Bush's plan. Gore's plan includes:

- Continuing the drive started under the Clinton-Gore administration to hire more than 100,000 new teachers.
- Making preschool available to all 4-year-old children and some 3-year-olds and expanding Head Start enrollment.
- Providing raises of as much as \$5,000 to qualifying teachers in poor and rural areas and an extra \$5,000 to "master teachers" who meet higher standards.
- Recruiting more teachers by offering scholarships to college students who agree to teach in schools with many poor students and bonuses to midcareer professionals who become teachers. ☐

Sources: *The Washington Post*, April 2, 2000; Republican presidential debate, Manchester, N.H., Jan. 26, 2000; *The New York Times*, Feb. 29, 2000; Republican presidential debate, Johnston, Iowa, Jan. 16, 2000; *Detroit Free Press*, April 1, 2000; *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Sept. 3, 1999.

Issue comparisons on wages, health care and Social Security are available on the Web at: [www.aflcio.org/lab2000/cand\\_index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/lab2000/cand_index.htm) or by calling 202-637-5010.

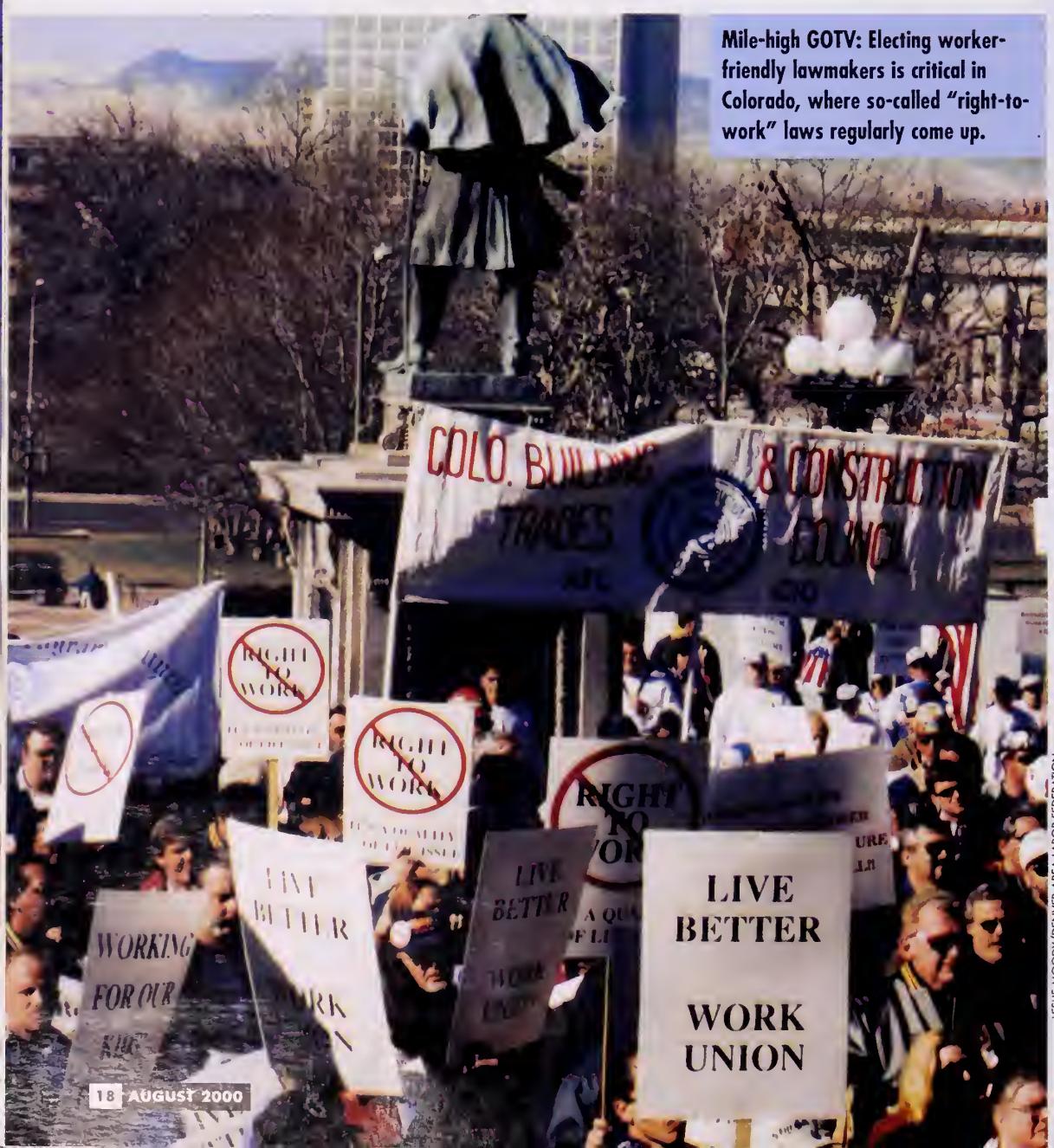
# What's at Stake

## State by State

BY MIKE HALL

**T**he battle for the White House and Congress is critical for working families mobilizing as part of Labor 2000 to elect Vice President Al Gore to the presidency, recapture the House and Senate and enact a Working Families Agenda. But around the country, state federations, central labor councils and local unions also are mobilizing working families to vote on critical state and local issues.

**Mile-high GOTV: Electing worker-friendly lawmakers is critical in Colorado, where so-called "right-to-work" laws regularly come up.**



Here's a look at a few state ballot initiatives and elections and how unions are planning to fight.

### Battling a billionaire in California

California unions are mobilizing for a massive working family get-out-the-vote effort to defeat a private school voucher scheme that could decimate public schools and divert funds away from other vital public programs.

The Draper Initiative—named after Silicon Valley billionaire Tim Draper, who spent more than \$2 million getting enough signatures to put the anti-school measure on the ballot—would provide vouchers worth \$4,000 a year to all private and parochial school students. Kenneth Burt, political director for the California Federation of Teachers, says it would cost almost \$3 billion in the first two years just to pay for students already enrolled in private schools, and the money would come out of the portion of the state budget not already set aside for education.

"If you take \$3 billion or \$4 billion of the general fund, everybody will be scrambling, and you have to cut somewhere, like law enforcement, or raise taxes," Burt says.

Those figures do not include students who might leave public schools. The No on Vouchers 2000 Committee, a coalition of education groups, unions and community organizations, estimates public schools could lose \$3 billion to \$4 billion in funding because their funding formula is based on student population.

Under the initiative, private schools are exempt from the state's curriculum and performance standards and high school exit exam requirements, Burt says. The schools also would not be required to hire certified teachers, account for how they spend the tax-paid vouchers or have nondiscriminatory admission rules, he says.

"What's really crazy is that anybody could set up a school. We'll have fly-by-night schools popping up on street corners ready to take in that \$4,000 a student," Burt warns.

CFT, the California Labor Federation and the No on Vouchers 2000 Committee are energizing the network of working families built by union political mobilization efforts during the 1998 fight against Proposition 226.

"Worker-to-worker contacts, worksite fliers, volunteer phone banks, home visits—that's how we have to get the message out about this," says Bob Balgenorth, COPE director for the State Building and

Construction Trades Council of California. "And when we do, I think we'll get folks fired up."

### Making Michigan's high court worker-friendly

Michigan's Supreme Court is so staunchly pro-business and anti-worker in its decisions against injured and unemployed workers that the state's Chamber of Commerce launched a series of ads in Ohio touting the court's anti-worker track record in an effort to lure firms to relocate. But three of the justices are up for election this fall, and the Michigan State AFL-CIO and local unions have begun an education and mobilization drive to get their members to the polls.

An analysis of the Michigan Supreme Court's workers' comp and unemployment insurance rulings over the past two years shows that, in every case, the court ruled in favor of the employer, says Denise Cook, SEIU Michigan State Council legislative director. "That defies statistics and logic."

Cook says some of the decisions even defy common sense. In one case, a worker's hair and scalp were torn from her head when her hair became tangled in a machine. She tried to seek damages, but the firm that had designed and made the machine had been bought by another company. The court ruled that the machine's manufacturer had no responsibility to warn the companies that purchased the machines about possible malfunctions.

"Most people think judges are nonpartisan, but when you look at the decisions they make and their impact on workers, there's definite partisanship," says Paul Seldenright, state federation political director. Seldenright says Gov. John Engler (R), who has a long anti-union record, appointed all three judges to fill out unexpired terms.

Cook says that the opportunity to elect working family-friendly justices means "we've got to get information about the candidates into the worksites as soon as possible through the affiliates' worker-to-worker programs."

### Drawing the line in Texas

Working families in Texas have a one-vote edge (16-15) in the state Senate—the same body that will play a key role in reshaping the Lone Star State's congressional districts in 2002, when the districts are reapportioned based on this year's census. Texas union leaders say that if working families

lose their majority, anti-worker state legislators will ensure the new districts represent the interests of Big Business, not workers.

Preliminary redistricting plans show Republicans seeking to gerrymander the voting districts in a way that could dramatically change the state's congressional delegation from today's 17-13 working family majority to a 10-12 seat deficit, says Rosa Walker, Texas AFL-CIO assistant political director.

Texas union members are working to ensure that pro-worker candidate David Fisher, a local attorney, is elected to the one open state Senate seat for which no incumbent is running.

"We've got about 19,000 members in the district, and 57 percent are registered. The first thing we're doing is sending out letters with voter registration cards to all the unregistered members," she says. Union members who are deputy registrars will register their peers in the worksites and by going door to door.

"We're going to get in the plants to let people know who David Fisher is and what he stands for," Walker says.

### "Right-to-work" won't work in Colorado

Colorado union members have long and successfully fought attempts by the state legislature to pass so-called right-to-work legislation. But the threat of passage of a "right-to-work" law has become even greater, now that two worker-friendly lawmakers can't run for re-election because of Colorado's term limit laws, says Leslie Moody, president of the Denver Area Labor Federation.

"If we lose the legislature, a right-to-work bill could sail through," Moody fears.

To ensure a "right-to-work" bill, likely to be introduced in the next session, doesn't become law, Colorado's unions have set their sights on 10 races, eight of which are in the Denver metro area, where the concentration of union members is largest.

Moody says the combination of a months-long education campaign about the threat of right-to-work laws—which will continue through Election Day at local unions—and an intense Labor 2000 effort are the keys to success in November.

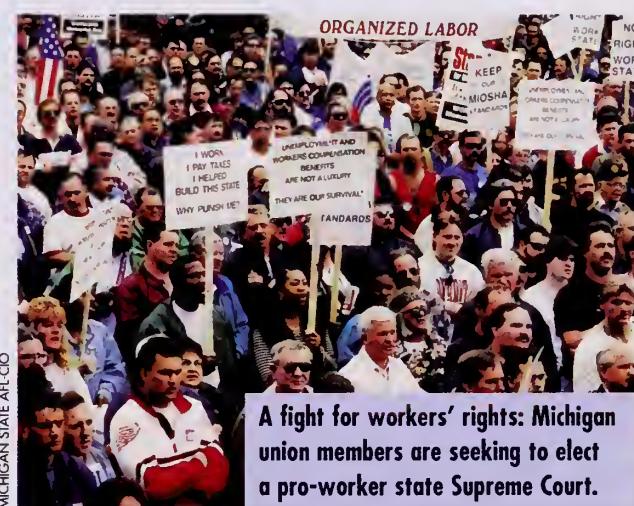
Over the Memorial Day weekend, members of 14 local and international unions began intense campaign training in preparation for the months ahead.

"We have six trainings scheduled and 300 captains and volunteers recruited—and our work has just begun," Moody says. "We estimate it will take 40 to 50 coordinators working with 800 to 1,000 activists in the field to actually reach, register, educate and turn out the labor vote in 2000. We'll reach more than 40,000 union families at their homes with important voting and issue information between now and November."

### Oregon unions take the initiative

This fall, Oregon voters are faced with dozens of ballot initiatives. In June, at the biggest COPE convention ever in Oregon, union delegates mapped out battle plans to defeat 15 anti-worker measures and work for passage of six pro-working family issues.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Tim Nesbitt says a key goal approved by the 335 delegates to the state COPE convention in Portland is "registering, educating and turning out enough union household voters to deliver one in every four statewide votes."



MICHIGAN STATE AFL-CIO

A fight for workers' rights: Michigan union members are seeking to elect a pro-worker state Supreme Court.

If union members make up a quarter of all voters, Nesbitt thinks there is an excellent chance to defeat two paycheck deduction initiatives—a tax-cut measure that would gut public services and another that would prohibit public school contracts from basing pay and layoffs on seniority. With enough votes, working families also would win initiatives to improve health care, boost public school funding and provide a campaign finance system.

Nesbitt says the strategy for Oregon's working families is the same as in all Labor 2000 actions: "Direct mail, phone contacts and one-to-one outreach to families, friends and neighbors to enhance our voter registration, member education and voter turnout." @

# Hunger Amidst Prosperity

**Marlene Young** never imagined she would depend on a food bank to feed her three children. Especially since she and her husband both work.

"It's hard, trying to put food on the table," says Young, 36, who works nights at a Burger King in her native Flint, Mich., so she can stay home during the day to care for her 3-year-old daughter. Young, who says her daughter is "always hungry," estimates she visits the local food pantry every two weeks to enable her family to make ends meet. "You shouldn't have to use a food bank while you work," Young says.

Yet millions of Americans, many of them working and many of them children, face hunger every day. Even as the latest overnight millionaire grabs the headlines, the number of people living in households that were hungry or living on the edge of hunger rose from 26 million in 1997 to 31 million in 1998, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Some 4 million children under age 12 go hungry in this country, and about 9.6 million more are at risk of hunger, according to the Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project.

"America's moans of hunger have by and large been drowned out by the euphoria of the longest peacetime economic expansion in the nation's history," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman said in October.

Like Young, most of those who experience hunger do so as a result of low wages. In households seeking emergency food assistance, 49 percent of those who are employed are working full-time, according to America's Second Harvest, a nationwide network of 186 food banks which also runs the childhood hunger identification project.

"While more parents than ever are working, they often are working at wages too low to support a family," says James Weill, president of the nonpartisan Food Research and Action Center. "They need higher, family-supporting wages, starting



with a minimum-wage increase, and they need supports like food stamps."

Following the 1996 federal welfare reform law, some states have been unwilling or unable to get food stamps to eligible poor families, including legal immigrants, not on welfare, according to a FRAC report. And those who do leave welfare are not necessarily better off, says Doug O'Brien, public policy and research director at Second Harvest.

"The average person who has left welfare earns between \$6.50 and \$7 an hour; two-thirds live in poverty," O'Brien says. "Where do they go when something goes wrong? Emergency food banks." In a national study of more than 25,000 emergency food programs, Second Harvest found that more than one in eight persons requesting emer-

gency food had been cut from cash assistance in the previous two years. Meanwhile, the U.S. Conference of Mayors reported an 18 percent jump in emergency food bank use in 1999, the highest increase since the recession in the early 1990s.

Judy Lugo, member of Communications Workers of America Local 6186, has seen firsthand the need for emergency food aid. A supervisor with the Texas Department of Human Services in El Paso, Lugo says in the wake of welfare reform, the state has made it extremely difficult for people to get food stamps—even though they qualify. As a result, more families suffer hunger.

"We always used to be able to refer people to food banks, but they're all tapped out now," Lugo says. "They've been tapped out for years."

Legislation now in Congress attempts to redress some of the effects of the 1996 law. The Hunger Relief Act of 1999 (S. 1805 and H.R. 3192) would expand eligibility for the food stamp program. The Food Stamp Outreach and Research for Kids Act of 1999, the FORK Act (S. 1800 and H.R. 2738), would require states to provide clear information about food stamp eligibility to those no longer eligible for welfare assistance. Passage of either bill before Congress adjourns this fall is "murky," O'Brien says, and will depend upon public pressure.

Dozens of organizations provide ways to get involved in the fight to end hunger, including Second Harvest, which offers a list of local food pantries where people can volunteer.

But as Weill cautions, volunteering at food banks and donating to private organizations are important—"as long as people don't get the idea that food banks take the place of policy changes the nation needs to dramatically reduce hunger." ☐

—Tula Connell

## Action Resources:

- Ask your representatives in Congress to support the Hunger Relief Act and the FORK Act: 202-224-3121.
- Find out where you can volunteer at a food bank: [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org).
- Take part in Fast for a World Harvest Day Nov. 16: [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org).
- Sign a petition to be presented at the United Nations on World Food Day, Oct. 16, requesting world leaders commit more resources to end world hunger: [www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com).
- Donate a cup of grain to "hunger hot spots" by clicking on: [www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com).
- Contribute to FRAC's "Campaign to End Childhood Hunger": [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org).
- Learn how you can get involved in living-wage campaigns by visiting the AFL-CIO website at: [www.aflcio.org/articles/am\\_at\\_work/corp\\_transforming.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/articles/am_at_work/corp_transforming.htm). ☐

# The Life of the Party

California dreamin': Boilermakers Local 656 member Morris Powell and Swifty.

icking up a storm of attention at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles this year, Swifty, the Democratic donkey, brought the party symbol to life as the first flesh-and-blood equine to attend the convention in recent memory.

The 4-year-old donkey traveled to the center of Democratic Party power with his owner, Boilermakers member Morris Powell, a crane operator from Rising Fawn, Ga. Powell long has been involved in county and state politics and says he often thought a real donkey should be part of the convention.

His search for the right candidate ended two years ago when he spotted Swifty at a nearby mule breeding farm. Powell, 56, says Swifty's personality and good looks—in July he was voted the handsomest donkey at a Chattanooga, Tenn., horse show—made Swifty ideal for national television.

With Powell's contacts from his political activism and financial help from Boilermakers Local 656 and the national Boilermakers, Swifty and Powell were given the go-ahead and the means to travel to Los Angeles, where they expected "a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Powell says if Swifty were blessed with the vocal abilities of Mr. Ed, he might have this message for voters: "Working people better get off their, uh, duffs and start mobilizing for the election." You heard it—straight from the donkey's mouth. ☐

## Not All in the Family

**D**on't try to pass the hat to pay for a co-worker's retirement gift at the *Register-Guard*, a daily newspaper in Eugene, Ore. Under a "no solicitation" policy unilaterally imposed by the employer, union members are prevented from collecting money for retirement gifts, baby showers—even passing around get-well cards, if collecting money is involved.

The *Register-Guard*, a family-owned newspaper, imposed the policy after The Newspaper Guild Local 194, a Communications Workers affiliate, sought to extend the benefits of union membership to part-time workers three years ago.

Although the Northwest office of the National Labor Relations Board found in February there was reasonable cause to consider the policy an unfair labor practice, the company refuses to discuss a solution with the union—and is trying to make the policy a permanent part of the contract in current negotiations.

"Before, we used to have a really open atmosphere," says Suzi Prozanski, president of Local 194 and a feature writer for the newspaper. "Now the workplace is a lot less friendly. The policy has a chilling effect on camaraderie."

As Prozanski says, "it makes it feel less like a family newspaper." ☐

## UNION LINE

**U**nion Hotel Guide is a complete directory of union hotels, motels, resorts and travel lodgings in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Produced by the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees, the 106-page guide provides an alphabetical listing of unionized hotels by state, with addresses and telephone numbers. Additional information covers hotel features and Internet addresses. For a free copy, write to HERE, 1219 28th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007; fax a request to 202-333-0468; or visit the website to access the guide at [www.hereunion.org.hotelguide](http://www.hereunion.org.hotelguide). ☐

## Opera Hits a High Note

**T**here's new "hope" for opera as a result of the first U.S. opera written in support of unions since the 1930s. Opening Aug. 25 in Madison, Wis., and running four nights, "Esperanza" ("hope" in Spanish) is "part of the movement to recreate a culture of union organizing—a battle in which the arts, with their ability to stir emotions and evoke important truths, can play a critical role," says Wisconsin State AFL-CIO President David Newby.

Based on the 1954 blacklisted film *Salt of the Earth*, "Esperanza" tells the true story of a Mexican-American mineworkers' strike in the Southwest and



Karlos Moser, artistic director

the remarkable role women in the community played. The opera tackles the hard and divisive issues of race, class and gender equality and social and economic justice.

The state federation is holding several "community conversations" with the public to discuss the opera and educate people about the blacklist period.

The 26-member cast is represented by the Musical Artists, and the 17 orchestra members are part of Musicians Union Local 166. Co-sponsored by the South Central Federation of Labor in Madison, the opera is a Labor Arts Project of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO and the Wisconsin Labor History Society.

For more information, call the state federation at 414-771-0700; fax: 414-771-1715. ☐

# The new economy online

**F**ind out more about what the new economy means for the nation's workers by checking out the following websites...



**Common Sense Economics**—[www.aflcio.org/cse/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/cse/index.htm)—The AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics site provides bread-and-butter economic information for working families, including a look at how workers are doing in today's economy, what the corporate agenda means for working families and the role of unions in the new economy.

**futurework**—[www.dol.gov/dol/asp/public/futurework](http://www.dol.gov/dol/asp/public/futurework)—The U.S. Department of Labor's site on "Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century." Click on the "futurework Report" to learn more about changes in the workforce; work and family; wages, benefits and employment; workplace conditions; technology and globalization; and the implications of these changes.

**The 2030 Center**—[www.2030.org/agenda.asp](http://www.2030.org/agenda.asp)—The 2030 site focuses on the often detrimental impact of "new economy" policies on young workers. The site shows that jobs lacking adequate benefits and full-time hours hurt young workers most, and proposals to privatize Social Security would end guarantees of a secure retirement. Sign up for 2030's e-mail updates or join the action team.

**Working Partnerships USA**—[www.atwork.org/wp/index.html](http://www.atwork.org/wp/index.html)—A project of the Labor Council of South Bay (Calif.) AFL-CIO, the site is dedicated to building a strong link between regional economic development and community well-being and to developing state and national workforce policies that benefit working families.

**New Economy Information Service**—[www.newecon.org](http://www.newecon.org)—The Foundation for Democratic Education's site brings together leading figures from unions, government, business, academia and social action groups to consider issues related to the new economy in fresh ways. Sections include labor, education, work-family and globalization.

**The Washington Alliance of Technology Workers**—[WashTech](http://www.washtech.org), a Communications Workers of America affiliate, tackles the impact of the new economy head-on. The organization seeks to establish a voice for high-tech workers—whether they are full-time, "temps" or contract employees—and ensure they have such basic workplace rights as sick pay and medical coverage.

**United for a Fair Economy**—[www.ufenet.org](http://www.ufenet.org)—UFE focuses on changing federal economic policies that enhance and protect the wealth of the nation's richest 5 percent while endangering the economic security and well-being of growing numbers of low- and moderate-income working families.

**The New Economy Index**—[www.neweconomyindex.org](http://www.neweconomyindex.org)—A project of the Progressive Policy Institute, this website provides a set of economic indicators, gathered from existing public and private data, to illustrate funda-

mental structural changes in the U.S. economy and show what those changes mean in the lives of working Americans.

**Massachusetts Employees Association**—[www.cppax.org/issues/mea.html](http://www.cppax.org/issues/mea.html)—A project of Citizens for Participation in Political Action, a Massachusetts grassroots organization, the website was created to address the concerns of workers, especially contingent, part-time and temporary workers.

**Working Today**—[www.workingtoday.org](http://www.workingtoday.org)—A national nonprofit membership organization for free-lancers, consultants, independent contractors, temps, part-timers, self-employed and contingent employees, Working Today advocates policy changes that would improve the working conditions and benefits of today's workforce.

**Employee Benefit Research Institute**—[www.ebri.org](http://www.ebri.org)—The EBRI site provides issue briefs in such areas as retirement planning, savings, health care, long-term care, contingent workers and workers in alternative work arrangements. Includes the EBRI brief "Contingent Workers and Workers in Alternative Work Arrangements."

**National Employment Law Project**—[www.nelp.org/contingent.htm](http://www.nelp.org/contingent.htm)—A longtime advocate for low-wage workers, NELP spearheads initiatives for contingent and subcontracted workers and immigrant workers, and develops policies for unemployment insurance and work and family issues. Download "Contingent Workers and Coverage Under the Fair Labor Standards Act," which assists organizers and workers who are confronted with a minimum-wage or overtime violation in subcontracting or independent contractor employment. ☐

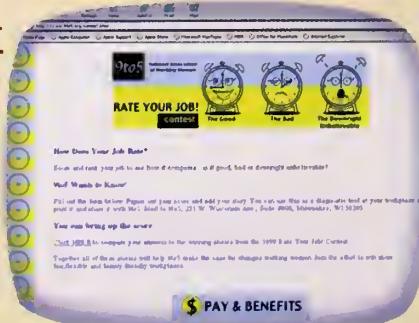
## Logging on for a Cyber Break

Workers seeking relief from job pressures can take a break in cyberspace—and get a few laughs—from the following websites:

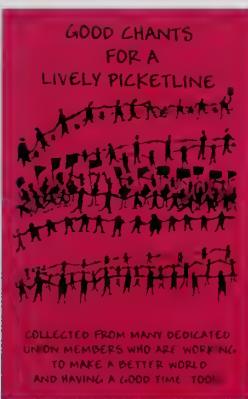
**Rate Your Job Contest**—[www.9to5.org/contest.html](http://www.9to5.org/contest.html)—Sponsored by 9to5, National Association of Working Women, the site offers a "Rate Your Job" contest to find out whether your job is "good, bad or downright unbelievable."

**Take Ten**—[www.ufcw.org/break/](http://www.ufcw.org/break/)—This portion of the United Food and Commercial Workers website urges visitors to "take a break" and e-mail a joke or a description of their jobs. The e-mails are posted for visitors to chuckle over—at least until their break is up.

**Temp 24-7**—[www.temp24-7.com/LIVE/issue/current/home\\_frames.html](http://www.temp24-7.com/LIVE/issue/current/home_frames.html)—This site bills itself as an "electronic water cooler" for temporary workers who want to vent their gripes and frustrations. Includes a game called "Temps vs. Suits" and a section in which users can contribute their "Temp Tales of Terror." ☐



## RESOURCE GUIDE



**Good Chants for a Lively Picketline**, compiled by AFT member Ruth Goldbaum, includes 61 chants from union activists who share Goldbaum's belief that a "good chant can be a good energizing and organizing tool." Goldbaum collected and produced the booklet with the help of the Greater Hartford (Conn.) Labor Council. Available free from Goldbaum at [goodchants@aol.com](mailto:goodchants@aol.com) or on the Web at [www.laborheritage.org](http://www.laborheritage.org). ☐

**Test of Courage: The Making of a Firefighter** offers a behind-the-scenes look at aspiring firefighters who are competing against 5,000 applicants for 50 jobs in Oakland, Calif. Filmed over two years, the hour-long documentary shows the grueling training and preparation of an ethnically diverse group of applicants as they undergo tests of physical agility and intellectual preparedness and an oral interview that determines whether candidates have "the right stuff." Airs Sept. 3 on PBS. Check local listings for time. ☐



VICTOR SIRA



## TELEVISION

**The City (La Ciudad)**, a film by David Riker, examines the lives, loves, hopes and dreams of Latin American immigrants living in New York City. Riker's film began as a 15-minute student project about an immigrant puppeteer who dreams of a better life for his daughter. After receiving critical acclaim for the original short version of *The City*, Riker received funding to film three more segments. "Bricks" shows the bleak lives of day laborers who gather on street corners looking for work, "Seamstress" depicts the harsh sweatshop conditions many undocumented immigrants endure daily and "Home" concerns finding and losing love in a strange land. Using mainly nonactor immigrants, Riker's 83-minute film is primarily in Spanish with English subtitles. Airs on PBS stations nationally Sept. 22. Check local listings for time. For more information, visit the website at [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org), click on "Press Room" and scroll down to "The City."

## PUBLICATIONS

**Slanting the Story: The Forces That Shape the News**, by Trudy Lieberman, details the unrelenting, ideological barrage of information right-wing think tanks and conservative organizations produce daily in a concerted effort to shape the news. Lieberman, director of the Center for Consumer Health Choices at Consumers Union, says this self-serving information is spread by the media, which have become the conservatives' silent partners. She examines how right-wing strategies have succeeded in getting the media to drum up public support for ending Head Start children's programs, drastically altering Medicare, abandoning Social Security and gutting

the regulatory powers of the Food and Drug Administration. \$21.95. The New Press, [www.thenewpress.com](http://www.thenewpress.com).

**The Business of Journalism: 10 Leading Reporters and Editors on the Perils and Pitfalls of the Press**, William Serrin, ed., examines the growth of news censorship and self-censorship by reporters as media conglomerates consolidate the news and entertainment industries and blur the line between editorial and advertising departments. Serrin, a former labor reporter for *The New York Times* and an associate professor in New York University's journalism department, says the "values of business are more and more becoming the values of the American newsroom." The result is a shift toward producing unoffensive "happy news," according to Pat and Tom Gish, owners and editors of the *Mountain Eagle*, an eastern Kentucky weekly newspaper. Serrin thinks the "unwritten rules of journalism" discourage reporters from writing stories that offend large corporations or people of money or position. Other contributors include Ronnie Dugger, former publisher, *The Texas Observer*; Jay Harris, publisher, *Mother Jones*; John Leonard, television critic, "CBS Sunday Morning"; Sydney Schanberg, former *New York Times* correspondent and columnist; E.R. Shipp, ombudsman, *The Washington Post*; James Warren, Washington bureau chief, *Chicago Tribune*; and Vanessa Williams, former president, National Association of Black Journalists. \$17.95. The New Press, [www.thenewpress.com](http://www.thenewpress.com). ☐

## Celebrate Labor Day Online with T-shirts, Caps and More



union's [workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) portal to order union-made items celebrating the world's first nationwide Online Labor Day Festival, Aug. 30-Sept. 6. ☐

Commemorate the AFL-CIO Labor Day Online festival by outfitting your family with T-shirts and caps emblazoned with the festival's logo. Or, let your children try a temporary tattoo of the logo. Also available are coffee mugs, foam soft drink holders, flying disks and bumper stickers, plus a 2001 Art of Ralph Fasanella calendar.

Click on [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) or your

# Online Labor Day Festival

SEE YOU AT THE  
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AUG. 30-SEPT. 6, 2000

## TO DO

- Visit the Online Labor Day Festival at [workingfamilies.com](http://workingfamilies.com) portals.
- Smash corporate greed.
- Peek inside the CEO's wallet.
- Register to win prizes.
- E-mail congressional candidates about the Working Families Agenda.
- Send online Labor Day cards to all your friends.
- See what the Bible, Torah and Qur'an say about worker justice.
- Tune in to a labor music video.
- Read what union brothers and sisters say about Labor Day and today's unions.
- Download a free screen saver.
- Play "Find the Health Insurance."
- Make your voice heard for Delta Air Lines, Mt. Olive, Overnite, Wal-Mart, Pictsweet and Kmart workers, as well as poultry workers and striking actors.
- Hook the kids up with games and fun links.
- Read mini-reviews from celebrities about books and movies that changed their lives.
- Get the real story about the people some call "Big Labor" and "Union Bosses."
- Buy great union-made stuff.
- Solve a Labor Day crossword puzzle.
- Take a look at 100 years of U.S. labor history in photos.
- Take pride in your union's accomplishments.
- Play the hottest, rockin'est songs of working people anywhere in cyberspace.
- Join brothers and sisters online for solidarity, action, pride—and fun!

S M T W T F S

It's all at  
**[www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com)**  
and your union's [workingfamilies.com](http://workingfamilies.com) portal

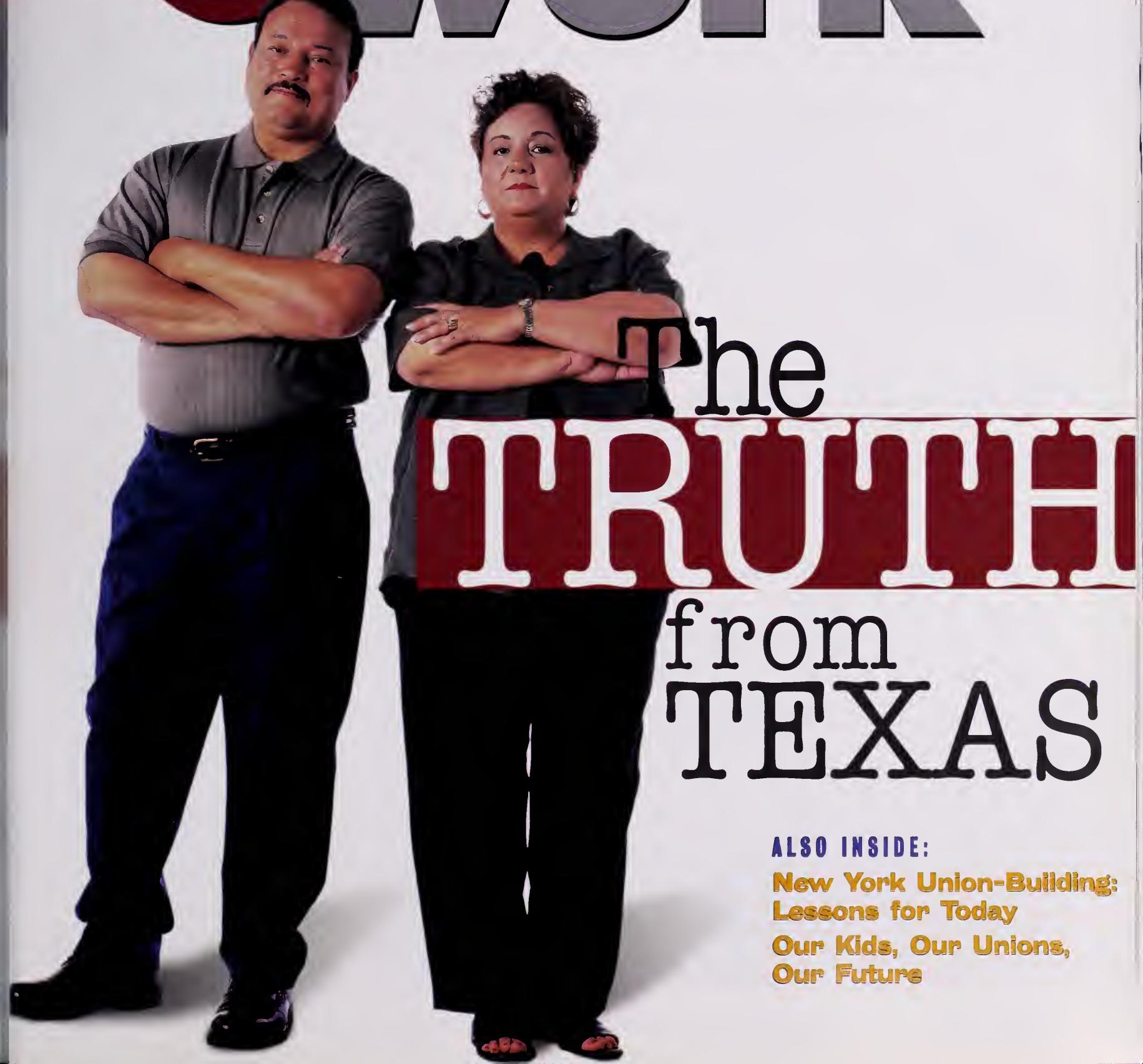


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# America at Work



## The TRUTH from TEXAS

ALSO INSIDE:

**New York Union-Building:  
Lessons for Today**  
**Our Kids, Our Unions,  
Our Future**

**"IT'S ABOUT TIME** that those who help get the chickens to the family table finally get a voice in their workplace. After reading of the working conditions of the chicken catchers, I doubt many of us would go through the daily struggles as they have for so long. Everyone dreams of making it in this country, but those of us at the blue-collar level never quite reap our due reward, unless we unite in a union and negotiate a contract....Typically, union members make anywhere from 15 percent to 30 percent more than nonunion employees and enjoy such benefits as seniority rights, a true grievance procedure, health benefits and pension plans, just to name a few. In short, those chicken catchers will come to know that, 'It's not just a contract, it's a lifestyle.'"

—Chuck Dobry, shop steward, Communications Workers of America Local 2100, Baltimore

### SAY WHAT?

How is your union getting workers ready to meet the challenges of the new work environment?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: atwork@aflcio.org

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

#### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS PARTNERED WITH THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY:

"Over the past 10 years, my union has developed a better rapport with the religious community through...the Labor-Religion Coalition. The coalition's basic belief is that religion at its core and labor at its best seek to create social and economic justice on Long Island....The religious community has joined labor on its picket lines....[W]hen labor and religion stand together, it is a powerful weapon for social change in our community."

—William Lindsay, business manager, Electrical Workers Local 25, Hauppauge, N.Y.

**"IT WAS WITH GREAT** interest and enthusiasm that I read the article 'Getting Members to the Ballot Box' in the June 2000 issue. As a retired Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (now PACE) member and current state senator, I know firsthand what a tremendous difference our members can make when it comes to helping elect union-friendly candidates to office. Here in Big Sky Country, we have 46 union and associate members running for legislative seats, and we're going to do our level best to see that each...one of them gets elected."

—Glenn A. Roush, Cut Bank, Mont.

**"I'D LIKE TO CORRECT** an error that appeared in the July 2000 issue of America@work. In the article 'Keeping the Faith,' SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign was mistakenly credited for assisting the Delmarva chicken catchers organize with the UFCW for a voice on the job. In fact, Jobs with Justice provided significant assistance to the catchers' campaign.

The article is wonderful and sheds much-needed light on the importance of building coalitions between labor and the religious community. Jobs with Justice [www.jwj.org] chapters across the country are making tremendous strides at bringing religious and community leaders to the aid of workers fighting for a voice on the job. Their good work was overlooked in your article, and I hope this letter brings due attention to their vital role in our growing labor movement."

—Mary Finger, UFCW international vice president and director, Civil Rights and Community Relations, Washington, D.C.

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.

## America@work

September 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 9

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Subscriptions: \$10/year for 11 issues. Send check to AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, or order with credit card by calling 800-442-5645.

Denise Mitchell (Assistant to the President for Public Affairs); Donna M. Joblanski (Publications Director); Tula Cannell (Editor); Mike Hall, Laureen Lazarovici, James B. Parks (Assistant Editors); Arlee C. Green (Staff Writer); Calleen M. O'Neill (Proofreader/Copy Editor). Design: The Magazine Group Inc.

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America@work (ISSN 1091594X) is designed to inspire and support front-line union leaders and activists with tips, tools and news you can use in the fight to build a strong voice for America's working families. It is the official publication of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and is issued 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to America@work, Support Services Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

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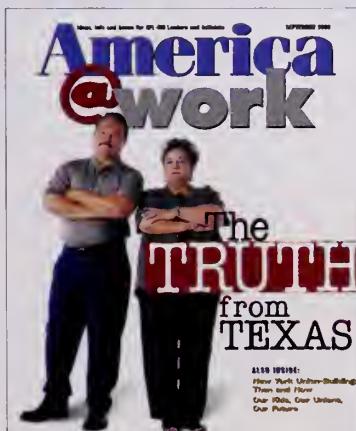
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COURTESY SEIU



# 'We Will Win'

**W**hen AFL-CIO President John Sweeney addressed the Democratic National Convention Aug. 16, he was accompanied by four union members. Sweeney and the quartet were among the 1,500 union men and women who made up 30 percent of the 5,000 convention delegates who nominated Vice President Al Gore and Sen. Joseph Lieberman for the nation's highest offices.

Joining Sweeney were Sonia Mosely, an AFSCME nurse from California; Stan Valentine, an Illinois UAW member; Helen Chin, a New York City teacher and AFT member; and Fire Fighter Kelly Fox from Washington State.

"They are the reason the AFL-CIO endorsed Vice President Al Gore. They are the reason he won victory after victory in the primaries. And they are the reason he will win the White House in November," Sweeney said.

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson noted the diversity of speakers and the delegates. "I am not one of those brown-skinned people who were

paraded across the podium in Philadelphia [site of the Republican convention]....For the Democratic Party, inclusion isn't a cynical, election-year idea," she told the delegates Aug. 14.

Other union voices heard from the convention podium were AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, AFT President Sandra Feldman, SEIU President Andrew Stern and Maria Elena Durazo, president of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 11 in Southern California.

The AFL-CIO's Working Women's Department co-sponsored a Working Women Vote rally Aug. 17 with Chavez-Thompson, Tipper Gore and working women from around the country. @



DAN CO/IMPACT VISUALS



Live from L.A.: SEIU President Andrew Stern (top) speaks to Democratic convention delegates, including 1,500 union members.

# CELEBRATING LABOR DAY

**L**abor Day 2000 had something for those who like traditional celebrations and something for those who are into the cyber-age. Several hundred thousand people celebrated Labor Day by surfing over to the AFL-CIO's Online Labor Day Festival, Aug. 30-Sept. 6, at [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) portals.

Visitors played "Smash Corporate Greed" and "Find the Health Insurance" and wandered through more than 50 booths set up by unions, state federations, local labor councils and advocacy groups. They were greeted on video by such celebrities as Martin Sheen of NBC's "The West Wing," by union leaders and in live webcasts by Vice President Al Gore and U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.

Cybersurfers watched videos and listened to rock, gospel, country and folk music of working people. They won prizes ranging from Lenox

china to autographed NFL football helmets. And with Labor Day being the traditional start of the high-gear election season, working men and women registered to vote and e-mailed candidates and politicians, urging them to support a Working Families Agenda.

In more traditional Labor Day celebrations, tens of thousands of working men and women and their children in Detroit joined with the Michigan State AFL-CIO and marched under the banner "When Working Families Vote—We All Win!" in one of the nation's biggest Labor Day parades.

In Cincinnati, several thousand union members and their families had an entire amusement park, Coney Island, to themselves for thrill rides, mini-golf and paddle boats.

Hundreds of other parades, picnics and rallies took place from small towns to New York City's 5th Avenue. @

# A Crowning Victory

**A** campaign by Crown Shareholders for Fair Value and PACE International Union, assisted by the AFL-CIO Office of Investment, succeeded Aug. 24 in stopping the takeover of Crown Central Petroleum by company insiders. Crown announced at its annual shareholders' meeting that the vote in favor of the takeover fell far short of the required votes needed for the family of Crown CEO Henry Rosenberg to acquire all remaining shares.

"Stopping the Rosenberg family's takeover of Crown is a victory for Crown shareholders," says PACE President Boyd Young. "Rosenberg and his fam-

ily have mismanaged Crown Central Petroleum's assets, failed to end the lockout of 252 of our members, violated environmental regulations and ignored civil rights problems."

For further information on the PACE campaign, visit [www.crownboycott.org](http://www.crownboycott.org). @



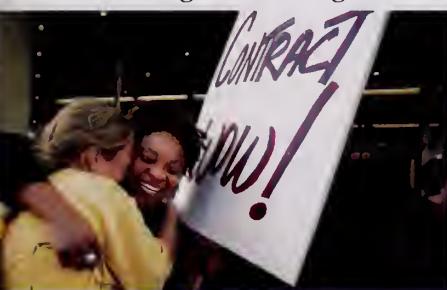
PACE President Boyd Young

# Turning a New Page

Workers at Powell Books in Portland, Ore., are helping to write a new chapter in gaining a voice in the workplace in the generally nonunion book-selling industry. After 14 months of struggle, the 420 workers, members of the Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 5, signed their first contract with the bookseller Aug. 14. "It's a great

contract," says Mary Winzig, a bargaining committee member. "It's the fruit of two years of hard work. We stuck together to do it."

The workers first voted for ILWU in April 1999 by a one-vote margin. In contract talks, management refused to budge on pay, benefits and union security, but all those issues were resolved in the final three-year agreement. During negotiations, the number of employees increased, ILWU recent past-president Brian McWilliams says. Instead of union support dwindling, as it often does when new workers come in, the union effort grew thanks to a strong internal organizing drive. "The strategies came from the bottom up. They were responsible for it, and they liked it," McWilliams says. @



Celebration: Powell Books employees Mary Zartman, left, and Indira Allegra celebrate their first contract at the company.

## César Chávez HOLIDAY A LIVING TRIBUTE

March 31, the day of César Chávez's birth, has new meaning in California.

Gov. Gray Davis signed legislation Aug. 18 creating a statewide holiday that Chávez's son called a "living tribute" to the founder and longtime leader of the Farm Workers.

The legislation establishes a paid holiday for state employees and creates an optional César Chávez Day of Service and Learning, whereby schools are encouraged to provide students an hour of instruction about Chávez's life

of nonviolence and self-sacrifice in the struggle to improve the lives of millions of farm workers.

The measure, introduced by state Sen. Richard Polanco (D-Los Angeles), ensures that Chávez's birthday "won't be just another holiday," says Paul Chávez, the UFW founder's son. Helping others as part of the holiday observance "is what my father was all about. He didn't just talk about helping the poorest and most powerless among us change their lives—he went out and did something about it." @

## SPOTLIGHT

### CWA and IBEW Workers Settle at Bell Atlantic/Verizon

Some 86,000 members of the Communications Workers of America and Electrical Workers ended a two-week strike at Bell Atlantic/Verizon with contracts that include everything members of the two unions sought, including cutbacks in forced overtime, card-check recognition and employer neutrality in representation campaigns at the company's Verizon Wireless subsidiary. The three-year agreements cut the number of hours that customer service employees can be forced to work overtime from 15 hours per week to 7.5 hours; technicians and operators had forced overtime cut to 10 hours. The agreements also achieved the unions' major job security goals, including sharp limits on the transfer of work as a result of the GTE-Bell Atlantic merger that created Verizon.

"This settlement secures the future of our members at this company and it also helps sharpen Verizon's competitive edge," says CWA President Morton Bahr.

About 50,000 CWA and IBEW members in New York and New England reached an agreement Aug. 21 and another 37,000 CWA members in the mid-Atlantic

states ended their strike Aug. 23. The strong guarantees workers won against excessive overtime and job stress spotlight the growing importance of these issues to all workers, says Richard Hurd, professor of labor studies at Cornell University.

"Forced overtime, job stress and job security are all related," says Hurd. Employers try to save money by using overtime rather than hiring more workers so "they don't have to pay benefits or Social Security and they have the flexibility to set the hours."

The issues workers addressed in the strike affect blue-collar and white-collar workers, Hurd says, and as more workers understand how forced overtime and job security are connected, it will become an even bigger issue in collective bargaining. In recent months, the UAW raised it in negotiations with the Big Three automakers, as did the Machinists in talks with Boeing. @



On the line: Striking telephone worker Diane Smith, center, joins her fellow CWA members in Newark, N.J.

# Getting Their Due

MILDRED "MILLIE" JEFFREY, the first director of the UAW Women's Department and a founding member of the National Women's Political Caucus, and Monsignor George Higgins, often called "Labor's Priest," received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in an Aug. 9 White House ceremony. "As a true pioneer all of her life, this award is richly deserved recognition for her work on behalf of unions, women and minorities," says UAW President Stephen Yokich.

"No religious leader has stood with more workers than Monsignor Higgins," says Kim Bobo, executive director of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. "And if standing with workers isn't what the Medal of Freedom is about, then what is it?"



**Honored:** President Clinton presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Mildred "Millie" Jeffrey.

## SPECIAL KIDS AIDED BY UNION FRIENDS

In a labor of love, Transport Workers Local 252 members give up their days off for four days each June to provide transportation for some 1,200 athletes in the Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged. "Our members have always shown they have a soft heart when it comes to kids," says TWU President Sonny Hall.

For more than 15 years, Local 252 members in Long Island, N.Y., have volunteered their time and efforts to make the Empire State Games a success. Nearly 80 bus drivers and mechanics volunteer to make sure 16 buses are available from 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. to take the athletes on a one-

mile circuit from their dorms at Hofstra University to the events held at Mitchel Athletic Complex and Nassau County Community College. "These members are typical of union members around the country who are the backbone of programs to help others," Hall says.

For the athletes, many of whom have such disabilities as cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, hearing and visual impairments and amputations, the care the drivers give them in boarding and exiting the bus is special. "Without the support of the drivers, giving up their personal time over the weekend to help us, the games would not be as suc-

# GULF COAST WIN

Organizing efforts along the Louisiana Gulf Coast tallied a key victory when the Operating Engineers organized 830 employees of J. Ray McDermott, a construction company that builds offshore oil rigs and platforms at a shipyard in Amelia, La.

"The victory belongs to the workers," says Pete Babin, business manager for IUOE Local 406, which represents about 5,000 workers in the state. The McDermott employees, who voted for a voice at work Aug. 10, stood up to the company's aggressive anti-union campaign, which included signs outside management offices that read: "We are 100 percent against the International Union of Operating Engineers or any

other union getting into our operation." Local politicians and a company front group, Concerned Citizens for the Community, echoed those sentiments.

Five unions—Seafarers; Marine Engineers; Masters, Mates and Pilots/ILA; the National Maritime Union; and the American Maritime Officers—jointly formed the Offshore Mariners United, which is reaching out to workers through a two-hour radio show on station WTIX 690-AM.

"We hope to be a source of information and inspiration for mariners and their spouses," says Dave Eckstein, field director of Offshore Mariners United. The show aims to counter company misinformation about unions and membership, he says. ☐

cessful as they are," says 19-year-old David Maxwell, who has cerebral palsy and has competed in the wheelchair division for 14 years.

In the end, the union members say they are the ones who

gain the most from the experience. "Each year, we all come away better people for having participated," says Pete Dempsey, Local 252's president, who organizes the annual effort. ☐



**Special relationship:** TWU Local 252's support for physically challenged young athletes is "typical of unions around the country, whose members are the backbone of programs to help others," TWU President Sonny Hall (inset) says.

# Redefining 'Charity' as 'SOLIDARITY'

Labor councils and union locals will launch the first wave of working families' new charity, the Union Community Fund, this fall. Soon, workers in New Orleans, Houston, Seattle, San Jose, Calif., and Arizona will be able "to take the lead—in their own name—in charitable giving in their communities. They will be the ones making the decisions about how that money is spent in their own communities," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson.

In each location, an advisory board made up of representatives of unions and community-based groups will assess the key needs of the

local working families and determine which organizations are best meeting those needs.

The local board will fundraise at local worksites and allocate 75 percent of the money raised. National unions will distribute 15 percent of the money and the UCF national board will distribute 5 percent and invest another 5 percent to make the fund grow. ☐



DAVID KAMBA

**Union Community Fund Board: AFL-CIO Vice President and board member Robert Georgine talks with Monsignor Jack Egan during a reception for the board in Chicago.**

## 4,381 Miles, 12 Cities, 13 Days: NO SWEAT!

The Nike Truth Tour rolled across the country for 13 days last month, logging 4,381 miles to deliver a message to Nike and the nation's retailers to stop using sweatshops and to respect workers' rights. Ten students traveled across the country in a caravan meeting up with UNITE and other union members, religious groups and human rights groups in rallies and demonstrations.

The 12-city tour started in Philadelphia Aug. 3 and ended in Eugene, Ore., where the United Students Against Sweat-

shops held its annual conference, near Nike headquarters. In each city, students, workers and concerned citizens gathered inside Nike stores to unfurl banners from balconies, chant and perform street theater. In Chicago, 100 UNITE members and 100 union members from the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, an AFL-CIO constituency group, joined the students as they unfurled six banners inside the NikeTown on Michigan Avenue.

You can see video footage from the Nike Truth Tour at [www.BehindTheLabel.org](http://www.BehindTheLabel.org). ☐

## OUT FRONT

**O**n the back page, you'll find 7 Steps for mobilizing working families.

Here are 7 Reasons to Mobilize members to elect a president who will fight for working families:

1. For quality, affordable health care. Vice President Al Gore backs a strong Patients' Bill of Rights and wants to make sure every child in America has health insurance. In Texas, Gov. George W. Bush vetoed a patient protection bill and tried to restrict eligibility for the Children's Health Insurance Program. Texas has the nation's highest percentage of children without insurance.

2. For high-quality public education. Gore supports strong public schools and wants to invest in modernizing them and reducing class sizes. Bush supports using public funds for private school vouchers and opposes legislation to fix crumbling schools.

3. For fair, family-supporting wages. Gore supports raising the minimum wage, backs fair pay to help close the pay gap between men and women and supports Davis-Bacon prevailing-wage standards. Bush opposed minimum-wage increases in Texas three times, and he supports allowing states to "opt out" of minimum-wage requirements. He has remained silent on equal pay and opposes Davis-Bacon.

4. For a sound retirement system and health care for older Americans. Gore wants to invest a portion of the budget surplus to keep Social Security strong and provide a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. Bush proposes diverting a portion of Social Security funds into risky private accounts and says he'll consider raising the retirement age. Bush prefers a Medicare plan that would raise the eligibility age and establish a voucher system.

5. For good jobs and trade policies that benefit working families everywhere. Gore promises to put workers' rights and environmental protections into global trade and investment agreements. Bush does not.

6. For an administration working families can count on. Gore selected as his running mate Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.), who has an 80 percent lifetime voting record on working family issues. Bush chose former Wyoming GOP Rep. Richard Cheney, whose working families voting record is just 6 percent—worse than Newt Gingrich's. Gore's appointments to crucial posts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, will support working families. Not Bush's.

7. For a union voice at work. Gore supports workers' freedom to choose a union and has fought against "paycheck deception" moves to silence workers' voice in politics. Bush is proud of his state's "right-to-work" status, has tried to eliminate or privatize thousands of union jobs in Texas and supports "paycheck deception."

The reasons to mobilize are crystal clear. From now to Nov. 7, it's our job to spread the word.

(Sources can be found at [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/cand\\_index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/cand_index.htm).) ☐

## 7 Reasons to Mobilize



AL GORE  
PHOTO BY VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

By Mike Hall

# Truth

**T**hey say things are big in Texas—big ranches, big skies, big hats and big cattle. But as union members who are part of the Texas Truth Squad travel around the nation, they are letting working families know there is one more “big” thing in Texas—the big lies that Gov. George W. Bush and his Republican presidential campaign machine are telling about his record of “success” in Texas.

When it comes to such working family issues as education, health care for children, family-supportive wages and a healthy environment, “George Bush, bottom line, is not a working family-friendly governor. And if he’s not a working family-friendly governor, he is not going to be a working family-friendly president,” says San Antonio teacher Minnie Sanchez.

Sanchez, a Texas Federation of Teachers/AFT Local 1356 member, is one of several union members who signed up with the AFL-CIO Texas Truth Squad to tell working families in Cleveland, Philadelphia, Louisville, Ky., and beyond what life is really like under Bush.

## **'Higher education is not my priority'**

When Bush told the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* in 1998, “Higher education is not my priority,” he might as well have included education from preschool on up, says Austin AFT Local 2048 member Rita Haecker. A look at Bush’s Texas track record on education and other important children’s issues shows Texas children are starting behind—and being left behind.

Although Texas ranks 45th from the top among the 50 states on college entrance exam scores, in 1997, when Texas had a budget surplus of more than \$5 billion, Bush chose tax cuts over such important improvements in education as establishing pre-kindergarten for Texas children,



RON MILEWSKI/THE BETTER IMAGE STUDIO

reducing class size or boosting the pay of Lone Star State teachers. In fact, Bush cut some \$400 million from the teachers’ pension fund, despite a campaign promise not to do so.

“George W. Bush has not done a thing to advance education in Texas. In fact, he has squandered the opportunity to help Texas schoolchildren,” says Sanchez.

In city after city, Texas Truth Squad members also pointed out that education isn’t the only area in which Bush has failed children.

In 1999, Texas was rated the third worst

state in the nation to raise children—falling from 29th when Bush took office in 1995, according to the Children’s Rights Council, which ranks states based on such criteria as the percentage of children not immunized by age 2 and the high school dropout rate. Texas has the second-highest percentage of children without health insurance, according to the Children’s Defense Fund and the second-highest percentage of children living in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Yet Bush tried to restrict eligibility for Texas children under the federal Children’s

Union members, part of the **Texas Truth Squad**, are telling workers **around the nation** what life is *really* like under **Gov. George W. Bush**.



# CONSEQUENCES



**To tell the truth: Sheet Metal Workers member Alex Flores tells Chicago construction workers how union workers have fared under Texas Gov. George W. Bush. Sheet Metal Workers President Michael Sullivan is second from left. TOP RIGHT: AFT member Minnie Sanchez, center, joins Flores and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson to deliver a message to union voters.**

Health Insurance Program, which covers children in low-income families.

"Our kids' education and well-being should be Governor Bush's top priority, but it isn't," says Haecker.

**Public dollars for private schools**  
While Bush's attempts to establish a statewide voucher program using tax dollars for private schools have failed, he has not given up—and currently backs a privately funded state pilot program based on school vouchers. His federal education proposals, instead of working

to improve below-par public schools, would give parents "government checks they could use for parochial or other private school tuition," *The New York Times* reported in February.

Louis Malfaro, a longtime Austin elementary teacher and now co-president of Education Austin (the joint AFT/National Education Association local) has a warning for voters.

"One of the first things out of Bush's mouth is about vouchers, privatizing schools," Malfaro says. "He's lying to the American people about what worked in Texas. The Texas legislature has repeatedly rejected vouchers. The improvement in Texas schools is the result of initiatives and programs developed before Bush took office. They weren't his ideas."

Sanchez said one of Texas' poorest school districts, the Edgewood District near San Antonio, lost millions of dollars in state aid because of a privately funded voucher scheme blessed by Bush.

"It was almost \$4 million—money that could have been used to modernize schools, reduce class size, hire more teachers," Sanchez says.

## Kill the minimum wage

"It's hard enough to make ends meet. If Bush does away with wage laws, it'll be even harder," says Alex Flores, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 67 in San Antonio.

Getting the nation's wage laws appears to be high on Bush's agenda, Texas Truth Squad members say. Bush thinks states should be allowed to opt out of the federal minimum-wage laws, supports his state's \$3.35-an-hour minimum wage for agricultural and domestic workers and has attacked Davis-Bacon, the federal prevail-

ing-wage law that protects construction workers' wages.

In Cleveland in July, Bush's stand on wages drew a gasp from the 300 people gathered at a Texas Truth Squad town hall meeting. When Flores told the crowd that Bush thinks states should be allowed to opt out of federal minimum-wage requirements, many in the crowd looked confused.

"They weren't real sure what 'opt out' means," says John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor. "When I explained that it basically means that states would have the option to lower or ignore the minimum wage, there was an audible gasp."

Arister Reyna is a Farm Workers member in Texas' Rio Grande Valley who earns the federal minimum wage of \$5.15. But many of Reyna's relatives and friends who do not have a union contract struggle on the state's \$3.35 an hour wage.



**True wages: Bush expects Texas agriculture workers to support a family on \$3.35 an hour, says Farm Worker Arister Reyna.**

# It Pays to Pollute in Texas

"I am for clean air and clean water and I have the record to prove it," Texas Gov. George W. Bush has said.

But take a look at the record.

The Environmental Protection Agency says Texas is the worst state in the union for release of air pollution.

The Environmental Defense Fund says Texas ranks first in the nation for confirmed and suspected carcinogens in the air and first in cancer risk.

Bush has taken in more than \$1.5 million in campaign contributions from oil and gas companies that traditionally oppose tough environmental standards, according to the

Center for Responsive Politics.

One of those contributors is Crown Petroleum, which locked out 252 workers at its Pasadena, Texas, facility in 1996. The company was hit with a record \$1.25 million air pollution fine this year. But not long after CEO Henry Rosenberg attended a GOP fund-raiser in Baltimore, the staff of the Bush-appointed Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission recommended slashing the fine 30 percent, to \$873,000.

If Bush wins, says Joe Drexler, PACE International Union special projects director, "take a deep breath—it may be your last taste of clean air." ☐

"Gov. Bush said that they [workers] would do all right with that minimum wage, but it's hard to support a family with those low wages," he said through an interpreter at the Louisville, Ky., Truth Squad tour stop.

For Flores and his family, the federal Davis-Bacon law "has meant stability, security and a decent standard of living," he says. The law, designed to prevent contractors from low-balling bids by slashing workers' wages, calls for construction workers on federal projects to be paid the prevailing local wage.

But according to the Memphis (Tenn.) *Commercial Appeal*, Bush thinks the law is fraudulent. Bush's far-right Republican allies in Congress long have sought to repeal the wage law, and Bush, if elected, would sign its repeal, Flores and building and construction trades union leaders warn.

## Privatizing government

"You don't need a crystal ball to see what the future would be like for public employees if Bush becomes president. You just need to look closely at what he has done or tried to do," says Jesse Colunga, president of AFSCME Local 1624 in Austin, Texas.

One of Bush's first major drives as governor in 1995 was to privatize the branch of the state's social services that determines eligibility for food stamps and other assistance, a move that would have laid off some 13,000 public employees. Several private companies, some with ties to Bush supporters, according to the Communications Workers of America, began a scram-



The nose grows: George W. Bush's education claims are "far from the truth," says AFT member Rita Haecker.

ble for the \$2 billion contract.

Unions representing state workers, the Texas State Employees Union/CWA Local 6186 and AFSCME Local 1624, joined with the Texas AFL-CIO and community



Truth in advertising: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka discusses Texas Truth Squad flier with a Chicago worker.

and religious groups to fight the scheme on the state and federal level.

The unions rallied public support against the plan in Texas, but the final blow to Bush's scheme came from the Clinton administration. Because the workers determine eligibility for federally funded programs, including Medicaid, Bush needed a federal waiver from the Clinton-Gore administration. It was denied.

"I can assure you," Vice President Al Gore has said, "this administration will do what is best for the recipients of public assistance and...will look out for the interests of the workers who devote their lives to helping those recipients."

## The truth hurts

Big Business and the wealthy already have filled Bush's campaign coffers with \$93.2 million by August, with Bush outspending Gore by nearly 2-to-1, \$81 million to \$42 million, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. As Election Day nears, the Bush campaign will spend those big bucks on slick television ads touting his record in Texas and promising more of the same if he is elected, says Haecker. "But working families can help defeat Bush's tall tales, she says. "It's pretty simple: Keep telling the truth."

For more information on Bush's record and to download fliers you can copy and distribute, visit the AFL-CIO website at [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/cand\\_index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/cand_index.htm).

Check out how Texas under Bush ranks in education, health care and more at [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/texas\\_rankings.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/texas_rankings.htm). ☐

# Where Will the Next President Stand on Medicare?



CORBIS



AP PHOTO/FILE

**Medicare**, the primary health insurance for older Americans and people with disabilities, faces potentially serious funding problems in coming years. Through Medicare, older Americans pay for hospital treatment, rehabilitation by skilled nurses and hospice care, as well as medical bills, home health care and outpatient costs. Medicare coverage is guaranteed and lifelong. Medicare covers 99 percent of people age 65 and older and 5.4 million Americans with disabilities.

To keep Medicare solvent, Vice President Al Gore supports setting aside \$300 billion of the projected budget surplus.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush supports a plan outlined last year that would raise the eligibility age and, in effect, privatize part of Medicare by establishing a voucher system.

## **Seniors will pay less under Gore's plan**

Because Medicare does not cover prescription drugs, many seniors are forced to choose between food and medication.

To enable older Americans to afford prescription drugs, Gore supports a prescription drug plan guaranteed to all seniors under Medicare. Under Gore's plan, seniors pay no premiums and Medicare pays half the cost of prescription drugs up to \$5,000. He advocates allowing uninsured people between the ages of 55 and 64 to buy into Medicare coverage.

In June, House Republicans proposed a plan backed by Bush, which most seniors' groups denounced as election-year window dressing. Unlike Gore's proposal, the House plan would require seniors to pay a \$250 deductible and monthly premiums of between \$35 and \$40, and would pay for only half of drug costs up to \$2,100 annually.

While Gore's proposal would be administered by Medicare and cover all seniors and persons with disabilities, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that less than half would be covered under the House plan.

## **Bush seeks to privatize Medicare's drug plan**

Under the House plan, insurance companies, not Medicare, would design prescription drug policies—including setting terms for benefits, premiums and co-payments.

The risks associated with relying on insurance companies and HMOs to provide Medicare coverage were highlighted dramatically in July when 18 companies announced they were dropping health coverage for more than 700,000 seniors. Their move followed an announcement by most HMOs participating in Medicare Plus Choice that they likely would raise premiums or co-payments or reduce benefits. Medicare Plus Choice is a pilot program that allows HMOs to provide coverage traditionally provided by Medicare.

Senior groups warn that a prescription drug coverage plan administered by insurance companies and HMOs could have the same results down the road, forcing seniors to pay more for fewer benefits.

## **Bush supports raising Medicare eligibility age**

Bush backs a congressional plan to raise the eligibility age for Medicare and supports creation of private medical savings accounts, a scheme now in Congress that would benefit mainly the wealthy, not working families. Bush also supports means testing for Medicare recipients, meaning some recipients would have to pay more for services than they do under the current Medicare system, in which the same eligibility rules apply to everyone. @

Sources: The Associated Press, March 1 and 14, 2000; *The Washington Post*, July 4 and June 30, 2000, and April 25, 1999; Families USA press release, June 2000; and *A Charge to Keep* by George W. Bush, p. 238.

Issue comparisons on wages, health care and Social Security are available on the Web at [www.aflcio.org/lab2000/cand\\_index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/lab2000/cand_index.htm) or by calling 202-637-5010.

# New York Union-Building: Lessons for Today

BY JOSHUA B. FREEMAN

**M**any gains workers won after World War II came through collective bargaining: higher pay, grievance procedures, benefits and job protection. In heavily unionized areas such as New York, these advances also helped those not covered by union contracts. An aggressive union effort during the 1950s and 1960s to win a shorter workweek established a local norm for working hours lower than in most other cities, even at nonunion employers. But collective bargaining was only one strategy. After World War II, many unions embraced an expansive view of their role in civic life. In New York, the union movement, building on its strength in numbers and the liberal traditions of the city, proved particularly successful in establishing a rich collection of social programs.

Housing is an example. Raising wages helped workers afford nicer homes. But in New York, which had a severe housing shortage, unions got directly involved in providing affordable dwellings. First, they used their political clout to maintain rent control, instituted as an emergency measure during World War II. To this day, New York City caps the increases in rents landlords are allowed to charge,

**ON SEPT. 24, 1945,** BARELY THREE WEEKS AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II, New York City's central business districts ground to a halt. For a week, more than a million and a half workers milled around the streets or stayed home. Mail and package delivery stopped and tax collections plummeted—all the result of a strike by 15,000 elevator operators, doormen, porters and building maintenance workers, most of whom belonged to SEIU Local 32-B.

In an era when automated elevators were rare, elevator operators played an indispensable role in high-rise cities. But worker solidarity contributed at least as much to the strike's impact. In New York's Garment District, a quarter of a million unionists stayed away from work rather than cross a picket line. The walkout's mounting cost led to the appointment of an arbitrator, who ultimately settled favorably for the union, which sought an end to wartime wage caps. During the decade after World War II, unions achieved their peak strength, with one of every three U.S. workers carrying a union card. As the strike demonstrated, no city had a stronger union movement than New York. Its unionized workers ranged from garment and clothing workers—the largest group—to construction workers, members of the New York Philharmonic Symphony, machinists, longshoremen, diamond workers, upholsterers, Wall Street clerks, teachers and even seltzer water workers. This extraordinary diversity helped sustain New York unions during decades of economic and political change: Even as national union membership fell sharply in the 1970s and 1980s, one-third of New York's workforce remained unionized. New York's experience suggests strategies for building a strong and durable union movement that can make a real difference for working people and their communities.



COURTESY SEIU

enabling low- and middle-income families to stay in the city.

Second, unions joined with veterans' organizations and community groups to press for public housing for workers who made too much money to qualify for federally funded public housing (aimed at the very poor) but too little to afford decent housing. As a result, public housing in New York was built to higher standards and had broader public support than elsewhere. Today, there are long waiting lists to get into New York public housing even as other cities are actually blowing up public housing projects.

Finally, unions backed and financed nonprofit housing cooperatives. By the 1970s, union-sponsored projects, most built during the 1950s and 1960s, were home to 120,000 New Yorkers, as many people as lived in Chattanooga, Tenn., or Columbia, S.C. Many of these projects also included schools, libraries, auditoriums, union-sponsored banks, cooperatively owned supermarkets and recreational facilities—whole communities designed for and owned by working people.

Unions helped their members get other services, too. During the 1940s, they began winning health coverage from individual employers. In New York, many unions set up their own clinics—some of which still provide health care today. New York unions even helped found the non-profit City Center for Music and Drama—parent of the renowned New York City



**Then and now:** Striking elevator workers in 1945 (p.12, top) were among those paving the way for a strong New York union movement that today includes thousands of active union members.

Ballet and New York City Opera—so families of modest means could enjoy first-rate culture and entertainment.

### **Meeting tough times by organizing**

The American union movement faced tougher times from the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s. A severe recession in the 1970s, an anti-union business offensive, an increasingly conservative political climate and a growing predilection by employers to relocate to areas with few unions and low wages undermined union strength. Unions also suffered from internal disagreements over foreign policy and civil rights, and from a failure to connect with young workers.

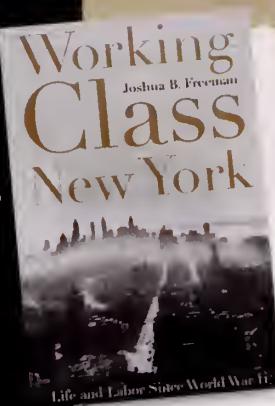
New York unions sustained fewer losses than unions elsewhere. Because the city's economy and union movement were extremely diversified, the contraction of manufacturing, though damaging, had less impact in New York than in cities like Youngstown, Ohio, which depended on heavy industry. Also, the New York union movement continued organizing new workers, compensating for the loss of union jobs because of industrial relocation and mechanization.

Organizing victories depended on support from the entire union movement and its allies. In the late 1950s, for example, a small union of drugstore workers, Local 1199, set out to unionize New York's giant hospitals. The New York City Central Labor Council and its affiliates contributed organizers, money and political support for the long, difficult—and ultimately successful—campaign. Today, 1199, now part of SEIU, represents 250,000 workers—it is the largest union in New York City.

### **Growing and diversifying for the future**

Unions cannot simply return to the methods that brought success half a century ago when unions benefited from the strong sense of shared identity that workers and their families developed in close-knit neighborhoods. Today, with suburbanization, urban sprawl and the relocation of industries, workers are less likely to live near each other. Initiatives like union health clinics based in union

This article by Joshua B. Freeman is based on his new book, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. \$35. The New Press; phone: 212-629-8081; fax: 212-629-8617; website: [www.thenewpress.com](http://www.thenewpress.com).



halls have a harder time succeeding when unionists are dispersed over a wide area. At the same time, new means of communication, such as the Internet, enable workers to rapidly distribute information. Unions still need a culture of solidarity, but must use new ways to create it.

Despite these changes, there are relevant lessons from the past. First, the union movement gains when it reaches out to broaden its constituency. New York's union movement has been exceptionally durable because it has included a wide range of workers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. As the workforce and economy change, the union movement must embrace new groups of workers and adapt to their needs.

Second, unions draw the greatest support when they bring their struggle to the community as advocates for all working people. Living-wage campaigns, efforts to fight against discrimination and support for improved health care, housing and education win union allies and bolster the moral and political standing of unions.

For a quarter-century after World War II, the union movement successfully fought for a more equitable distribution of wealth and power, while providing workers with unprecedented benefits and protection, thereby deepening the meaning of democracy. The union movement now faces greater challenges. But as it continues its revitalization, it can and should again assume an expansive role in helping to create a good life for all. ☐

*Joshua B. Freeman is a professor of history at Queens College (CUNY). He is the author of *In Transit*, co-author of *Who Built America?* and co-editor of *Audacious Democracy*.*

# Talking to TEENS

Two Activists Sa

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Across the nation, the union movement is reaching out to young people to educate tomorrow's workers about the importance of unions. Many union activists consider younger students to be among the hardest groups to reach because they have little or no experience as workers. The two articles that follow profile some high school activists who suggest ways for unions to reach their peers and examine union members who have made successful strides in reaching out to younger students.

## CHILD LABOR LAND

**W**hen Zachary Vitale's art teacher at New York's Oceanside High School announced a Sweatfree Schools poster contest sponsored by the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition, he saw an opportunity to research something he didn't know much about. "I had my eyes opened when I learned that mainstream American corporations exploit children my age," says Vitale, now 17. His pen-and-marker poster, "Child Laborland," won first place and a \$1,000 U.S. savings bond in the 10th-through-12th-grade division of the contest, co-sponsored by the New York State United Teachers/AFT.

Vitale used sarcasm to portray child workers in a mock amusement park, "to bring awareness," he says. A sign at the park's entrance tells a long line of little children that the price of admission includes their innocence.

Vitale plans to seek out and join anti-sweatshop activities this fall at Northeastern University, where he will be a freshman majoring in mathematics. "Now I know about child labor," he says, "and if I see that something is wrong, my instinct is to fix it."

For more information on the contest, call the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition at 518-459-5400, ext. 6294. 

Zachary Vitale

ROBERT VITALE



MARIE TRILLER

sity of Washington psychology professor and of a computer specialist, 17-year-old Bradbury continues today to raise awareness among her high school peers about such issues as sweatshops and the effects of globalization.

Bradbury organized a youth march that took 100 of the 1,700 Garfield students to the Seattle WTO rally. In May 2000, as a member of a group she and her friends call Youth Opposed to the WTO, Bradbury helped create a thought-provoking assembly for 200 of her fellow Garfield students. The students brought together a political science professor and a graduate student who debated an economics professor and a member of a pro-WTO Seattle host organization. "In the beginning, we had some students coming in and saying, 'What is the WTO anyway?'" Bradbury recalls. "But then they asked questions that showed they were interested."

Bradbury first became active a year ago, when she heard about the WTO's plans to hold its meeting in the United States and a

# Unions 'Gotta Get into Young People'

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

friend of her mother mentioned a Public Citizen-sponsored committee to organize students to protest at the WTO meetings. The issues weren't new to her, however. "Over the past few years, I'd been increasingly concerned with the question of corporate dominance of our society and the priorities that our world places on profits—over the environment, health, diversity and all sorts of other human concerns," Bradbury says. "In some ways, it was heartening for the WTO to show up, because it provided a tangible symbol for a lot of that stuff and provided a means of unifying all these different

groups of activists."

Bradbury, who grew up in a union-friendly family where labor songs were sung around the house, felt good about union members' presence in Seattle. "It was especially encouraging to see labor joining with environmentalists and other activists, because these diverse groups are united through their common goal of addressing globalization and the forces of capitalism that are our common oppressor."

As for teens, Bradbury says, "I do think a lot of teens feel like they'd like to change things, except they haven't got a voice. The tradition of unions is to unite and empower the voiceless, and that's the same thing that young people the world over are pining for."

Bradbury recalls that while young marchers cheered unionists they passed during the 40,000-strong WTO rally in Seattle, the teens Bradbury knows don't

tend to think about unions. "Young people are encouraged to see the career world as an individualistic thing, that you get ahead on your own, rather than by uniting with your fellow workers," she says. Teens tend not to think much about union issues because that's not their experience yet. So if unions want to become relevant to teens now, she suggests, union members should turn out for common issues—sweatshops, the environment and, increasingly, labor by U.S. prisoners.

"Many of the big issues for youth activists—sweatshops, globalization, the environment, human rights—are global issues," Bradbury explains. "Perhaps unions can best reach out to youth by reaching out across borders."

## Sha-King Graham: Channeling anger into activism

New vistas opened for Sha-King Graham when he turned 14. The child of incarcerated parents, he had been shuffled among foster and group homes until his stepmother took him to live with her in New York's Bronx borough. "I was already frustrated," recalls Graham, now 19 and getting ready for his freshman year at New York's New School. "Most people who grew up like I did eventually get involved in criminal activity. I didn't want to do those things, and I wondered how I could deal with my frustration and anger."

For starters, on the advice of his stepmother, a former Head Start worker and community activist, he enrolled in the Bronx Leadership Academy, a small public school that helped prepare him for college. And he became an activist, first joining his stepmother in public housing tenant organizing activities and then becoming involved in police brutality issues when his sister was killed three years ago.

While Graham continues his interest in

legal issues as a staff member with a Bronx-based group called Youth Force, which receives funding from the office of the mayor of New York, his activities have broadened to include unions and jobs. "It costs Nike \$6 total to produce a pair of Air Jordans, and they pay the Asian kids who make them \$1.50 a day," he says. "Who can survive on that? And these companies that make so much money off the sweat of these poor people and then sell their goods at the highest prices in the South Bronx, what jobs paying living wages have they created?"

Graham also is interested in the issue of U.S. prison labor. He recently participated in prison labor actions at Eddie Bauer and Victoria's Secret stores in Manhattan's Greenwich Village.

Graham says his Youth Force experience has given him some understanding of the union movement. "I believe that their purpose is to help people. We believe in a Yoruban (West African) proverb which says that if we stand tall, it's because we stand on the backs of those who came before us."

Graham says most of his peers have "no sense" of unions. They're aware if there's a major teachers' strike, but the young activists he knows have no contact with the union movement except at anti-sweatshop rallies, he explains. "If union leaders could come to our membership meetings and discuss what's going on with them, that would be a start," he suggests. "They could talk about the issues we have in common, like prison and sweatshop labor. It would show they're into young people." @



Sha-King Graham

# A Union Edu

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

WHEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS visited a Waterloo, Iowa, labor hall recently, activists from several unions pointed out their locals' charters, some going back decades. The unions' historical presence in the state surprised the students, who live in a so-called right-to-work state.

And when Electrical Workers Local 288 assistant business agent John Padget spoke with some African American students, he found himself telling them about the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s alliance with labor. "I think it was the first time they made the connection between civil rights and trying to change job conditions," says Padget.

The field trip marked the end of a semester-long labor history course Padget designed with his wife, teacher Marla Padget, a member of the Waterloo Education Association. While few activists have the opportunity to engage students in such complex and lengthy discussions about unions, opportunities abound for "quick hits": speaking to a classroom for an hour, participating in an assembly or a job fair, spending a day being "job-shadowed," chaperoning or hosting a field trip to the worksite or the union hall. And, according to activists who have brought unions into the classroom, there are ways—using personal, interactive and visual exchanges—to make the most of these brief but valuable contacts that can help generate a new understanding of unions among today's future workers.

GREATER CHARLESTON LABOR COUNCIL



**M**any union activists consider high school juniors and seniors, who are poised to hit the working world, the most important—and hardest—to reach. They're far from a homogeneous group. In Washington, D.C., for instance, most teens have scant knowledge of unions, according to Valerie Gleaton, a member of Letter Carriers Local 142. Gleaton regularly goes into classrooms and participates in career fairs and assemblies as part of a federal Schools-to-Career Act educational enrichment program administered by the Metropolitan Washington Council of the AFL-CIO.

In Los Angeles, most teens are pro-union, viewing unions "as a means of shaping their destinies," says high school teacher and California Federation of Teachers Local 1021 member Linda Tubach, who leads weeklong collective bargaining simulations with high school students. In less urban communities, many know little about unions—and in right-to-work states they may even have learned to fear them, says Meta Van Sickle, a University of Charleston associate professor of science and math education who created and raised funds for a school-to-careers program nicknamed Project Star. She called on the Greater Charleston Labor Council for help in pulling together the program for low-income children on Johns Island near Charleston, S.C.

Tubach advises union members who go into classrooms to talk about "stuff that's close to the kids—find out what their job

# cation

Building today's unions means reaching out to tomorrow's workers

Our kids  
Our Future  
Our Union



EARL DOTTER

**LEFT:** Unions center stage: Students from Frierson and Haught Gap middle schools in Charleston, S.C., learn about the value of unions in Project Star. From left, standing, Greater Charleston Labor Council President Tommy Crenshaw, South Carolina AFL-CIO President Donna DeWitt and Marvin Walker, president of Carpenters Local 2221, join Project Star students.

**ABOVE:** Robert Blatt, vice president of Musicians Union Local 161-710 and a cellist with the National Symphony, organizes field trips for high school students.

experience is." Although that varies by locale, a rich topic of discussion for many teens is working in a fast-food joint. "That's where many kids have their first work experience," Tubach explains. According to Stuart Tannock, author of the upcoming book *Youth at Work: The Unionized Fastfood and Grocery Workplace*, it's also where they are likely to experience time at work as a battleground, an important issue for unions, too.

All workers are hired on an "at-will" basis (you can be fired at any time for any reason or for no reason at all) unless covered by individual or collective contracts. Job applications that most teens receive—which speakers can copy and bring to class—say so explicitly, which can lead to spirited conversations. Tannock warns union educators not to lapse into "labor speak"—jargon meaningful only to someone who regularly examines labor contracts. "In discussion, move between the students and the contract," he advises. "Get them to talk about their experiences, what they'd want in a work contract."

Jon Garlock, member of New York State United Teachers Local 2842 and chair of the Rochester (N.Y.) Labor Council's education committee, which has sent activists to speak to kids in classrooms and at job fairs, has had great success with a fast-food application. "Half the kids have filled it out and they're shocked to find out what it really means," he says with amusement. "They say, 'Hey, that's illegal,' and I say, 'No, sorry, it isn't.'"

## Hands-on union jobs

With a little more time and a few more resources, union activists can give students a firsthand look at union jobs. This year, Nancy Martin, coordinator of school-to-careers programs for the Metropolitan Washington Council, called on Robert Blatt, a cellist with the National Symphony at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and vice president of Musicians Union Local 161-710. As part of an annual, national job-shadowing program, Blatt organized a field trip for high school students, who saw stagehands in action (members of Theatrical and Stage Employees Local 22) and learned how enthusiastic ticket-takers, IATSE Local 868 members, try to seat people so that no one's view is blocked. In future trips, he'll ask for four or five hours, not three, so there's time to make the connections between the center's jobs and its unions, and he'll introduce the students to the cafeteria workers, members of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 25. "With more time, we can discuss what happens if a union stagehand gets hurt."

When Jon Pusloskie, a telecommunications specialist and member of Communications Workers of America Local 1170, went to a job fair at a Rochester inner-city middle school work-



DAVID KAMBA

**"Start young": Letter Carriers Valerie Gleaton, left, and Jennifer Benjamin say unions should reach out to students as young as kindergartners.**

ing with the Rochester and Vicinity Labor Council, he told students about installing and maintaining telephone services, including Internet access. "And we tried to explain to the kids the benefits of being union, how it means higher pay and benefits in telecommunications," he says. "I'm not sure if they totally understand the concept of true unions, but the salaries, up to \$90,000 with overtime, get their attention."

#### **Getting the union message out early**

Some activists feel reaching younger students is just as important. "I usually tell them a union is a concerned effort of a group of people," says Tommy Crenshaw, president of the Greater Charleston Labor Council. Crenshaw has talked with local college students as a part of the labor council's outreach efforts, but first met middle and high school students two years ago under Project Star. "I say, 'You guys in this classroom, if more than half of you decided to play dodge ball, that would be a community of interest and a concerted effort of the majority, and you are a union, a union of students that prefer dodge ball.'"

## **The ABCs of Talking Union to Kids**

**Opt for a small audience:** If you are given a choice, small groups where you can answer questions and spark discussion are better than assemblies "where either no hands or too many hands go up," according to school-to-careers coordinator Nancy Martin of the Washington Metropolitan Council.

**Think visual:** "Show and tell is the best way to teach," says Greater Charleston Labor Council President Tommy Crenshaw. "Erin McKee, who'd been an airline attendant, made a poster with pictures and sketches showing jets, her job and what she did." If you're at a career fair for older students, for example, attract attention with a colorful video, with music, on an overhead monitor, NALC Local 142 President Joseph Henry suggests.

**Provide handouts:** There's wide agreement among activists that handouts—from coloring books to informative booklets, even key chains and pencils bearing union names—are important. Not only are they visual, but parents as well as kids may use or read them long after your contact. NALC Local 142 in Washington, D.C., created folders with pockets to give to students at job fairs so they could stow all the other materials they had received.

**Make contact:** Particularly if you're going to a school career assembly or fair, find how what you're expected to speak about, how much time you have and your placement, Henry advises. At one career fair, Local 142 activists Valerie Gleaton and Jennifer Benjamin found themselves isolated in the school basement.

**Be prepared:** Have a Plan B if you're going to speak at a job assembly. Henry once found his promised 40 minutes reduced to just 10. "I had to switch a lot of gears," he recalls.

**Go casual:** Hanging out with kids, such as chaperoning a field trip, can help establish a lasting positive impression of unions, according to University of Charleston professor Meta Van Sickle. Some kids, she says, often will be closed-mouthed until they've checked out a new adult. On a recent field trip, bus chaperones included union activists who handed out T-shirts incorporating the logos of the UAW, General Motor's Saturn division and the Greater Charleston Labor Council, which had helped finance the trip.

**Ante up:** With school in session during her work schedule, activist Gleaton takes unpaid leave from her job and her local replaces her wages. "Payment for community volunteer work is worth putting in a contract," coordinator Martin suggests. If your local has the money but you want to volunteer, donate the bucks to a school activity in which your local participates, says Crenshaw. ☐

Even kindergartners feel job pressure today, says Letter Carrier Gleaton, who visits grade schools with her fellow Letter Carrier-activist Jennifer Benjamin and hands out coloring books that depict occupations. Gleaton thinks that starting with the young ones and then keeping the contact through the years may be the best investment of her energy.

NALC Local 142 President Joseph Henry says the "most important ones to reach" are the youngest. "When you walk into an elementary school, whether it's Packard Bell or Dell, companies are branding the students," he explains. "In the sandbox, kids today know the brand names of different computers. We're the ones who are lagging behind." ☐

# Parents on the March

*Working families benefit when child care teachers are treated with respect and dignity*



**A worthy wage:** Child care workers in Wisconsin march for better pay.

LOU HOST-JOBINSKI

LIKE MANY WORKING PARENTS of preschool children, Kirsten Wysen knows why it is important her children are looked after by well-trained, experienced child care providers. "Those teachers do a better job in tough situations—like when children are fighting—and in curriculum development," says Wysen, a policy analyst at the King County (Wash.) Health Department. But because of low pay and a lack of respect for the work they do, child care workers leave their profession at an alarmingly high rate—between 30 percent and 40 percent a year, according to the child care worker advocacy group Center for the Child Care Workforce. "Turnover robs you of trained people," says Wysen. "Children need to learn to trust," she says. "Turnover is really disruptive for the kids, and for the teachers who stay."

To improve the quality of care for her children, Wysen wholeheartedly allied herself with efforts by Seattle's child care workers at 14 centers who sought a voice at work in 1998. Today, those workers have a contract that not only improves wages, but also encourages and rewards more education and training. Across the nation, hundreds of parents like Wysen are joining together with unions and community groups to stand up and say that working families benefit when child care teachers are treated with respect and dignity.

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

ne hundred fifty Seattle child care workers negotiated a first-of-its-kind master contract that includes better wages, benefits and a pension plan. The contract, ratified in May by the Child Care Guild of SEIU District 925, also includes guaranteed professional development and training and sets aside time for teachers to prepare for class and develop curriculum.

"We've set standards so that teachers recognize themselves as professionals—and others see us that way too," says Deadru Hilliard, lead teacher at Martin Luther King Day Home Center. "In any other profession where you work as hard as we do and get education and continue to grow professionally, you would be compensated accordingly. Having a union puts us in a better place to work for higher compensation."

Compensation for child care workers in Washington averaged \$7 an hour in 1998, according to a January 2000 report by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services—less than the hourly wage of fast-food workers at Dick's Drive-In, a Seattle restaurant chain. Nationwide, the average wage for child care workers in

Our kids our  
Our  
Future  
our  
soul.

1998 was \$6.61 an hour, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Under the new agreement, which establishes a worksite-by-worksit wage scale, union members will receive paid time off and tuition assistance for professional teacher training. Each center also will tailor educational opportunities. For instance, one center is developing courses taught through a local community college, such as sign language for toddlers and preschool curriculum planning. As bargaining began, "The members asked themselves, 'What is linked to high quality?'" says Dorothy Gibson, a union organizer and negotiator. "They knew it was training, so it was on the list from the very beginning."

Child care teachers and providers "realize the parents can't pay more," says Wysen. "I spend more on day care than I do on rent." Mobilizing for state and local funding "is a way to take steps to change the system, which means getting more government support," she says. Wysen marched with teachers, parents and students on Worthy Wage Day, May 1, when many child care advocates around the country called attention to the issue of quality child care.

### **Mobilizing parents**

Involving parents in unions' political efforts is one strategy that works, says Diane Gallagher, a former preschool teacher who was active in mobilizing the workers at her child care center in Madison, Wis., to join an independent union 15 years ago that recently affiliated with AFSCME Council 40. In a recent effort to secure more government funding for child care, Wisconsin union members and their community allies held meetings with elected officials and launched a successful e-mail and letter-writing campaign—which included distributing an "action alert" to parents. "That expands the influence of our members," Gallagher says, noting that each child care worker serves 10 to 15 families. "And the parents appreciate that. We, the parents and child care workers, have a common goal: creating jobs worth staying in."

After Pam Blankenheim learned about child care workers' success in organizing with Council 40, she moved her 6-year-old daughter Gina to a newly unionized day care center. At the facility Gina previously had attended, Blankenheim says, "there

were new teachers all the time," and high turnover, which often results in "children acting out, trying to see how far they can go to break the rules."

"The teacher who stays has been there with your child and has seen her develop. That teacher is more apt to tell you about the things—both good and bad—that your child does." When the newly unionized child care workers at University Avenue Day Care heard that Blankenheim had been active in the union she used to belong to, AFSCME Local 1942, they asked for her advice during contract negotiations, and she reviewed contract proposals, such as grievance procedures.

Organizers say getting parents involved is a key element of improving child care. "Parents are at least half the equation," says Gallagher. "Parents pay most of the fees—including the salaries. To make any change, we have to impact the people who pay for child care, and right now that's the parents," says Gallagher, now an organizer with the AFSCME Wisconsin Child Care Union.

### **Why it's important for parents to be involved**

Parental involvement also is crucial for child care activists in Pennsylvania. To commemorate Worthy Wage Day in May, parents and their children joined union members in making a quilt from students' photos and took it to the governor's office in Harrisburg, the state capital. The Pennsylvania child care campaign—which includes AFSCME, child care centers, social service agencies, the state AFL-CIO, parent groups and women's groups—spurred passage of \$100,000 in funding for an existing student loan-forgiveness program for aspiring child care workers. "If you don't engage in the public policy debate, you're not going to improve quality," says Denise Dowell, an organizer for AFSCME/National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees 1199C, which represents child care teachers.

Across the country in San Mateo, Calif., teachers at Palcare, which serves union members working at the San Francisco International Airport, are members of

Communications Workers of America Local 9410. The low turnover at the extended-hour day care center, open from 5 a.m. to midnight, is appreciated by parents, including Kim Pinsker, who has remained active on the Palcare board years after her children entered grade school. A flight attendant with United Airlines and a member of Flight Attendants Council 11, Pinsker says that when her two children, Joe, 9, and Rachel, 5, attended Palcare, they had the same teacher—even though they attended years apart. "It's good that it's union. They have good benefits and wages, and I can see it in the low turnover."

The San Mateo County Central Labor Council, which was instrumental in spearheading a coalition of parents, community groups and local governments to open Palcare in 1992, continues to mobilize parents and the community. Most recently, union leaders conducted a phone bank effort to beat back a state initiative that would have canceled newly enacted child welfare funding. Like unions nationwide, the labor council is building and maintaining coalitions with parents and elected officials to improve the quality of child care for working families and the quality of child care jobs.

"If parents want their children to develop in a healthy way, it is so much better for the center to be union," Blankenheim says. "That's why it's important for parents to be involved." ☐



**Setting standards: Members of the Child Care Guild of SEIU District 925 in Seattle negotiated a master contract that includes guaranteed professional training.**

## Union of LOVE

When union members Annie Cieslukowski and Rich Kohli of Toledo, Ohio, decided to tie the knot this year, the two union activists said the choice for a wedding date was easy: Labor Day weekend.



They chose Labor Day weekend because "we are proud union members and we tell everyone we can about the benefits of union membership," says Cieslukowski, an advertising copywriter for the *Toledo Blade* and an executive

board member of the Toledo Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers of America unit. "My family was always a strong supporter of unions," she says. "We hope to have children and raise them the same way."

Cieslukowski met her fiancé, a Steelworkers member who works at Cooper Engineered Products in Bowling Green, Ohio, through the Internet last year. In January 2000, on a beach in Mexico, Kohli proposed.

On their wedding day, Cieslukowski says, "We'll be making our getaway in an American-made car" and honeymooning in Florida. When they return, the newlyweds plan to campaign for Teresa Fedor, a member of the Toledo Federation of Teachers/AFT, who is running for state representative. Fedor is an inspiration to Kohli, who is taking classes at Owens Community College and plans to become a middle school teacher.

Next Sept. 3, the couple will have two milestones to celebrate: their first wedding anniversary and their second Labor Day as husband and wife. @

## A Winning BID

Clicking around eBay, looking for a great buy? You just might run into a familiar face: the AFL-CIO collector's edition of *America@work*.

Recent bidders in eBay's collectibles section had the opportunity to make an offer on the January 2000 issue, a compilation of historic photos and

quotes depicting workers' struggles and successes in the 20th century. Robert Brindza, a retired AFSCME international vice president, says he put the magazine on eBay to spread the word about union history. Some buyers purchase two or three copies at a time, whittling down his cache of 100 copies, he says.

Brindza, of Grandview Heights, Ohio, has augmented 43 years of involvement in the union movement with a quarter-century of gathering labor

## Cast Your Union E-Ballots Here

When workers at Jackson General Hospital sought a voice at work with Steelworkers' Local 5668 in nearby Ravenswood, W.Va., the 200 nurses, physicians' assistants, nurse assistants, and X-ray and lab technicians expected they would be confronted with forced meetings and other anti-union measures. But they didn't anticipate their election would be part of a poll by a local weekly newspaper.

Days before the election, organizer Joy Randolph received a phone call from a friend who told her the *Jackson Independent* was running an online poll asking readers whether the hospital workers should vote for the union.

"We were behind 69 percent to 31 percent," Randolph recalls.

She sat down at her home computer and fired off e-mails to union supporters and friends, asking them to cast their e-ballots.

"We turned that right around, 67 percent to 33 percent the day before the election," Randolph says. Randolph notes the poll allows a person to vote only once—so this was not a case of 21st-century ballot-box stuffing.

Although the e-mail "tree" reversed the tide—and the workers went on to vote for Local 5668—Randolph says when the paper was published, it didn't include the poll results.

"Makes you wonder whose side they were on," she says. @

## UNION LINE

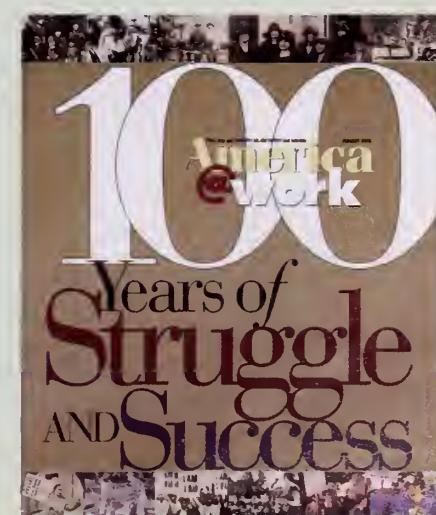
### Wear it Union Made

UNITE provides an online, up-to-date list of unionized companies that make promotional products at [www.uniteunion.org/unionlabel/promo2.html](http://www.uniteunion.org/unionlabel/promo2.html). The website also lists several suggested uses for the items, such as including logos on baseball caps and knitted caps for active and retired members, printing colorful "Get Out the Vote" T-shirts and using embroidered patches for awards. @

memorabilia. His collection of 4,700 items fills dozens of cases, many of which he takes to trade shows to spread the union word.

Brindza suggests union members "do what I do and donate copies to their local library."

The January *America@work* is available from the AFL-CIO. Single copy: \$2.50; 50-99 copies: \$2 each; 100+ copies: \$1 each. To order, call 800-442-5645; in Washington, D.C., call 202-637-5042. @



## Lesson Plan

For many students, hearing from a union advocate in their classroom may be one of few opportunities to learn about the union movement. These Internet sites enable you to get the resources you need to bring the union message into the classroom.

[www.cft.org/comm-n/labsch](http://www.cft.org/comm-n/labsch)—The California Federation of Teachers' Labor in the Schools Committee aids teachers in reaching students with information about the history of the U.S. union movement and its place in a democracy. The site provides a downloadable resource guide for teachers and materials suitable for students in all grades.

[www.uniteunion.org/research/research.html](http://www.uniteunion.org/research/research.html)—UNITE's website offers a history of the union, and links to Cornell University's website on the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire and the Kheel Center's History in Action presentation on women leaders in the needletrades unions.

[www.efn.org/~labor\\_ed/stw.htm](http://www.efn.org/~labor_ed/stw.htm)—The Unions and Schools website, sponsored by the Lane County (Ore.) Labor Council, provides information on unions' roles in school-to-work programs and guidelines for creating a labor mentoring program.

[www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/curricul.htm](http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/curricul.htm)—Click here to find A Curriculum of United States Labor History for Teachers

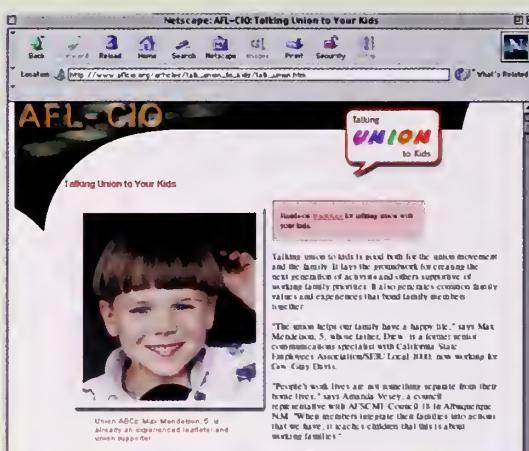
sponsored by the Illinois Labor History Society.

[www.reuther.wayne.edu/archive-links.html](http://www.reuther.wayne.edu/archive-links.html)—Wayne State University's Walter P. Reuther Library site has 50 major links to industrial relations libraries, labor archives and historical societies.

[www.neravt.com/left/labor.htm](http://www.neravt.com/left/labor.htm)—Offers 135 links to other sites grouped under Labor Issues and Class Struggle Links.

[english-www.hss.cmu.edu/history/us-labor-law.txt](http://english-www.hss.cmu.edu/history/us-labor-law.txt)—This Carnegie Mellon University site offers information on U.S. labor laws, from the Clayton Act to the Landrum-Griffin Act.

[www.igc.org/wbai-labor/resource.html](http://www.igc.org/wbai-labor/resource.html)—The Internet Labor, Union and Community Resources website



provides links to hundreds of other websites, listed alphabetically.

[www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/6460/AmLabHist/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/6460/AmLabHist/index.html)—American Labor History: An Online Study Guide features dozens of links to general union sites, research pages and publishers, and includes a list of union-related newspapers going back to the 19th century that are available on microfilm.

[www.davison.k12.mi.us/academic/hewitt14.htm](http://www.davison.k12.mi.us/academic/hewitt14.htm)—Webquests and Resources for Teachers, a creation of Davison (Mich.) High School, provides lesson plans for teaching labor and union history.

[www.uniononline.com/html/KF/schoolhouse.htm](http://www.uniononline.com/html/KF/schoolhouse.htm)—Click here to access 38 teacher and student websites of varying usefulness, including Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators, which has more than 800 links for teachers to enhance curriculum, and PBS TeacherSource, where users can search the entire PBS site.

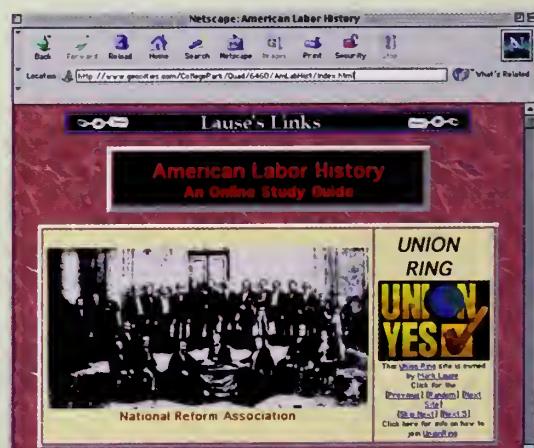
[www.laborissues.about.com/news/issues/laborissues/msub1studies.htm](http://www.laborissues.about.com/news/issues/laborissues/msub1studies.htm)—Tap into the information available from the labor studies programs at 17 universities and colleges, plus get direct access to Department of Labor statutes.

[www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)—The AFL-CIO website offers comprehensive resources for union leaders seeking to engage students in learning more about unions. It includes:

- 100 Years of Struggle and Success, a photo essay with highlights of workers and their unions from the past century, [www.aflcio.org/laborday/gallery/main.swf](http://www.aflcio.org/laborday/gallery/main.swf).

- Student activism against sweatshops, [www.aflcio.org/sweatfree/students.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/sweatfree/students.htm).

- Talking Union to Your Kids, [@](http://www.aflcio.org/articles/talk_union_to_kids/talk_union.htm)



## Resources Backpack

- The California Federation of Teachers has published a 20-page *Labor in the Schools Committee Resource Guide for Teachers* listing books, videotapes, software, archives, lesson plans, Internet resources and more for teaching about unions. Many ideas are California-specific, but others are more general. For a free copy, call 510-832-8812 or visit [www.cft.org/comm-n/labsch/labsch5.shtml](http://www.cft.org/comm-n/labsch/labsch5.shtml).

- California teacher-activist Linda Tubach recommends a teachers' guide with student materials called *The Power in Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States*. \$18. Call Teaching for Change at 800-763-9131, or search its catalog at [www.teachingforchange.org/catalog](http://www.teachingforchange.org/catalog).

- For labor-related movies, see Tom Zaniello's book *Working Stiffs, Union Maids, Reds, and Riffraff: An Organized Guide to Films About Labor*. \$45 clothbound, \$19.95 paperback. Call Cornell University Press, 607-277-2338, ext. 251, or visit [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu).

- Central labor councils and the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C., are sources of printed materials that can be used with students. For example, Greater Charleston Labor Council President Tommy Crenshaw likes giving students the AFL-CIO's booklet *The Big Lie*. Single copies are free. To order, call 800-442-5645 or visit [@](http://www.aflcio.org/catalog/right2work.htm)

## MEETING

### Labor's Voices: Past and Present

Union and nonunion journalists will join union activists and historians, scholars and students for a three-day conference on the role of labor journalism, its challenges and its place in the future. "Labor's Voices: Labor Journalism, Communication and Media, Past and Present," will be at the Center for Worker Education at City College in New York City Oct. 6-8. Panelists include The Newspaper Guild/CWA President Linda Foley and *New York Times* reporter Steven Greenhouse. Cost is \$75 for individuals and \$25 for students and seniors. For more information, call 212-340-2816; fax: 212-340-2822. ☐

## PUBLICATIONS

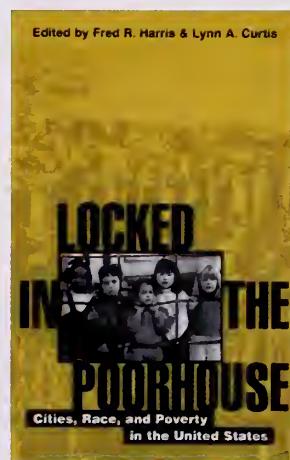
*Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money for Social Change* provides a how-to manual on channeling charity to create social change. Authors Chuck Collins and Pam Rogers point out that traditional charity targets needs—not the causes that create those needs. The result is a continuing cycle of need that requires more charity. *Robin Hood Was Right* provides numerous examples of organizations that are working for change. It includes an extensive appendix of foundations and groups, along with resources and worksheets on how best to calculate your ability to give. \$28.95 clothbound, \$17.95 paperback. W.W. Nor-

ton & Co., 500 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10110; [www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com); phone: 800-233-4830.

*Locked in the Poorhouse: Cities, Race, and Poverty in the United States*, edited by Fred R. Harris and Lynn A. Curtis, assesses where the nation stands 32 years after President Johnson's Kerner Commission

examined the causes behind the nation's racial unrest. The commission concluded that the nation was "moving towards two societies, one black, one white, separate

and unequal." *Locked in the Poorhouse*, a compilation of essays by noted experts, finds that poverty is worse now than in 1968 and that the country is resegregating, with African Americans and Hispanics locked in the poorest urban areas. Harris, a former U.S. senator from Oklahoma and a member of the Kerner Commission, points out that only the richest 20 percent of workers saw their incomes steadily increase between 1967 and 1996, while the concentration of poor in the inner city has grown from 30 percent to 42 percent. Curtis, who is president of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, con-



cludes with a prescription for solutions. \$24.95 clothbound, \$19.95 paperback. Visit the website at [www.rowmanlittlefield.com](http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com). Also available from the foundation are free copies of its report "To Establish Justice, To Insure Domestic Tranquility: A Thirty Year Update of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence." For more information, contact the foundation at 202-429-0440 or visit its website at [www.eisenhowerfoundation.org](http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org). ☐

## REPORT

"Work Without Justice: Low-Wage Immigrant Laborers," one of a series of reports produced by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. (CLINIC), examines the plight of low-wage immigrant workers. Through more than 25 case studies, the

report tracks immigrants from their native countries to jobs in the United States, detailing the horrors they face in being smuggled into the country and the harsh realities they find here. CLINIC's report

focuses on day laborers, service-sector employees, migrant farm workers and immigrants in the poultry and meat packing industries. \$10. Send a check payable to Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., 415 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017, Attn.: At-Risk Reports. Please specify the name of the report, quantity and shipping address. For more information, call CLINIC at 202-635-2556. ☐

### WORK WITHOUT JUSTICE:



"HIGH ROAD PARTNERSHIPS REPORT: Innovations in Building Good Jobs and Strong Communities," produced by the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, examines 14 high-road partnerships among unions, employers and communities. Case studies offer a variety of strategies for building an economy based on skills, innovation, opportunity and equitably shared prosperity. Available from the institute for \$5 per copy or free from its website at [www.workingforamerica.org](http://www.workingforamerica.org). For bulk orders, call 202-466-8010. ☐



# 7 Steps to Victory in November

## Attention local union leaders:

Put these 7 steps to work mobilizing your members for Labor 2000 and victory for a Working Families' Agenda on Nov. 7.

**1** Leaflet worksites with fliers that educate members about issues and candidates. For materials, contact your state federation, national union or the AFL-CIO, at 1-888-3AFLCIO.

**2** Use your local union newsletter. Publish stories about issues and candidates. Reproduce worksite leaflets or America@work one-pagers and other fliers, available at [www.aflcio.org/labor2000/cand\\_index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/cand_index.htm).

**3** Work your list. Keep your list of registered voter union members up to date.

**4** Work the mail. Send at least two mailings from your local to members about the importance of voting, what the issues are and where the candidates stand on the issues.

**5** Work the phones. Contact each local member by phone at least twice to stress the importance of voting, to explain the issues and to recruit volunteers.

**6** Register members. Mobilize to increase voter registration in your local by 10 percent.

**7** Get Out the Vote!!!



# America @ work

## ALSO INSIDE:

**Member-to-Member  
Mobilization**

**Denied: The Freedom  
to Join a Union**



## Food or Medicine?

*How the drug industry is spending millions to keep prescription prices high*

**"I HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE** to be able to attend the national religious-labor conference prior to the...AFL-CIO Convention in Los Angeles last fall. That conference, along with the religious and community support we have received over the years through our Metro Detroit AFL-CIO and the locked-out newspaper workers, made it clear to me how important it is for unions to work with the religious community. The Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues in Detroit, of which I am proud to say I am a part, is composed of caring women and men from Christian, Jewish and Muslim backgrounds. Our committee has led leafleting activities at Wal-Mart to protest the inhumane way it profits from the suffering of others....The religious community adds credibility to the labor movement...."—Dave Ivers, business agent, Operating Engineers Local 547, Detroit

## SAY WHAT?

What are some of the ways your union is reaching out to nonmembers in open shops?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue. *America@work*, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: atwork@aflcio.org

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT WHAT YOUR UNION IS DOING TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGING ECONOMY:

"Communications Workers of America Local 6222 in Houston has been reaching out to members and potential members....[W]e have taught anyone interested how to pass the technical/mechanical test, and we recently combined a correspondence course with an instructor-led course to help members pass the very challenging technical/knowledge test. As technology increases, we as unions not only have to accept it, but also have to band together and help each other understand it and master it."—Robert Mahle, vice president, CWA Local 6222, Houston

**"U.S. CONSUMERS** should be paying much lower prices [for prescription drugs] than their foreign counterparts [yet] a certain pill costing \$1.75 in the United States retails for \$0.19 in Mexico. Both pills are manufactured by a U.S. pharmaceutical company....However, a new and expensive ingredient has been added—advertising! A two-page ad in only a hundred newspapers costs between \$7 and \$10 million. Who is paying the cost? You, the U.S. consumer! It is high time that the government took drastic action to correct this injustice."

—Joseph T. Smisek, retired secretary-treasurer, American Federation of Grain Millers, Minnetonka, Minn.

*Editor's note: "Food or Medicine?" p. 8, documents how the drug industry is spending millions of dollars to keep the cost of prescription drugs high.*

**"YOUR STORY IN THE AUGUST** *America@work* about the Texas minimum-wage law told only half the story. The Texas minimum wage is only \$3.35 per hour, true. However, this is entirely meaningless, because the Texas Legislature has never enacted penalties for violators of the law. Nor has the Legislature authorized anyone to enforce the law, nor have they ever appropriated a penny for enforcement! Guess what? Gov. Bush hasn't lifted a finger to change this shameful situation, maybe because the Texas Republican platform calls for the repeal of every minimum-wage law."—Paul Sherr, retired member, CWA/Texas State Employees' Union, Austin, Texas

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in *America@work*.

## America@work



October 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 10

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Subscriptions: \$10/year for 11 issues. Send check to AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, or order with credit card by calling 800-442-5645.

Denise Mitchell (Assistant to the President for Public Affairs); Donna M. Jablanski (Publications Director); Tula Cannell (Editor); Mike Hall, Laureen Lazorovici, Jones B. Parks (Assistant Editors); Arlee C. Green (Staff Writer); Colleen M. O'Neill (Proofreader/Copy Editor). Design: The Magozine Group Inc.

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*Behind the Label: Inequality in the Los Angeles Apparel Industry*

Music: *Solidarity Rocks*

Cover: Colin Hawkins/Stone

# EARTHGRAINS SETTLEMENT HIGHLIGHTS FORCED OVERTIME

For Carlos Colon, a worker at the Earthgrains Co. plant in Chattanooga, Tenn., the motivation for spending weeks on a picket line is clear: "I need to be home for my two daughters. It's nice to make some extra money from overtime, but the money isn't worth it if you can't be with your family," he says.

Now, Colon and nearly 4,000 of his co-workers, all members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers, are back at work at the nation's second-largest bakery. After nearly a month on strike, they ratified a first contract that limits forced overtime, an issue workers across the country increasingly are confronting. Before the contract, many Earthgrains employees were required to work 16 hours a day, and many seven days a week. Workers were on strike at nine plants beginning in late August, and were joined in September by BCTGM members at

18 other plants who walked out in a show of support.

The three-year contract also protects jobs, improves wages and pensions and restores medical and dental insurance that had been taken away during the strike.

While on strike, hundreds of workers turned out for a rally at Earthgrains' St. Louis headquarters Sept. 14. The strike also gained the support of workers around the world. In Portugal, union members held an informational picket at an Earthgrains bakery and at two distribution centers in Albergaria.

The strike was "a fight against companies that repeatedly deny workers' basic principles like dignity, justice and respect and that—despite record profits—push workers' backs to the wall," says BCTGM President Frank Hurt.

For more information, visit BCTGM's website at [www.bctgm.org](http://www.bctgm.org). ☐



Show of support: Hundreds of striking Earthgrains workers and their supporters rallied at corporate headquarters in St. Louis.

STEWART HALPERIN

# New Alliance Gains Momentum

Efforts to strengthen and restructure the union movement continue as more union leaders come together to craft a New Alliance, the AFL-CIO's program to invigorate state federations and central labor councils. On Sept. 19, union activists from Maryland and the District of Columbia gathered for a New Alliance drafting conference, following on the heels of similar conferences in New York and North Carolina last spring (see *America@work*, July 2000).

Union leaders from Washington, D.C., and Maryland discussed the effectiveness of joining together across local and state lines to ensure victory in key struggles to improve the lives of working families. Earlier this year, a prevailing-wage law for school construction passed in the Maryland legislature—a direct result of the coordinated efforts of the Maryland State and D.C. AFL-CIO, the Metropolitan Washington Council, the Metropolitan Baltimore Council of AFL-CIO Unions and dozens of local unions.

"Everyone pulled together for one issue and won," says Ron

DeJulius, manager of Operating Engineers Local 37. "The New Alliance will give us strength and direction" for similar victories, he says.

The New Alliance aims to build strength at the local and state levels by defining roles and responsibilities of union organizations, such as planning strategically and boosting participation with state federations and central labor councils. Leaders from all levels of the union movement met for three years to formulate the New Alliance, which the AFL-CIO Executive Council approved last October. ☐



Pulling together: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka speaks to Maryland and District of Columbia union leaders at a New Alliance drafting conference.

## Unions.doc

Smart union members regularly look for the union label when they are buying clothes and cars. In California, they now can do the same when they are in the market for a health care professional. The Union of American Physicians and Dentists, an AFSCME affiliate, has posted a directory of its California members on its website.

"Unions have always said,

'Buy union,' and we thought we should let other unions know that there are union doctors out there," says Gary Robinson, executive director of UAPD. "The website is terrific for our organizing efforts because we can say, 'Join us if you want access to 16 million union members and their families.'"

Visit the directory via [www.afscme.org](http://www.afscme.org) or at [www.uapd.com/ipa/union\\_doctor.htm](http://www.uapd.com/ipa/union_doctor.htm). ☐

National Contract at Kaiser

# A First for Caregivers

In 1997, the health care giant Kaiser Permanente and the 24 AFL-CIO unions representing workers there realized they shared common goals in addressing such issues as staffing and quality patient care—issues that could be addressed best in one national contract. If they succeeded, their pact would make history in the health care industry.

In September, a national contract became reality when Kaiser and the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions announced the first-ever national health care contract. The accord gives 64,000 front-line caregivers a greater voice in crucial decisions affecting the quality of patient care through a ground-breaking joint labor-management decision making structure. The contract also includes wage increases and improved health benefits.

"What I'm most excited

about is Kaiser Permanente's commitment to investing in its labor force," says Margaret McGowan-Tuttle, a member of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Care Professionals/AFT Local 5017. "By engaging us in making decisions on patient care, it will better the system when we can all make a difference."

Workers in AFSCME, AFT, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, Office and Professional Employees, SEIU, United Food and Commercial Workers and the Steelworkers will be covered under the agreement.

"The agreement takes another giant step in delivering the best care to our patients," says Dr. David Lawrence, chairman and CEO of the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, which serves 8.5 million people in 11 states and the District of Columbia. @

## Time to Dry Dock Floating Sweatshops

Seafarers President Michael Sacco (below) joined more than 100 SIU members and other union allies calling for an end to "flag-of-convenience" ship registries at a Capitol Hill rally Sept. 19. Also known as runaway-flag shipping, the system allows

shipowners to register their vessels in countries other than their own to take advantage of lax safety, environmental and labor laws, low or no corporate taxes and small registration fees. The results, speakers told the crowd, are ships akin to "floating sweatshops" where crew members often are exploited and paid substandard wages—if they are paid at all. Sacco endorsed the International Transport Workers' Federation's global campaign against FOC shipping. For more information on the global campaign, visit [www.itf.org.uk](http://www.itf.org.uk) or [www.seafarers.org/legislation/overview.html](http://www.seafarers.org/legislation/overview.html). @



## SPOTLIGHT

### Stronger Together: CWA and IUE Join Forces

Organizing workers in today's economy will take a new kind of union, and that's exactly what the leaders of the newly merged Communications Workers of America and IUE aim to create. Both unions approved the merger, which took effect Oct. 1, to open the door to a revitalized industrial organizing effort.

IUE becomes CWA's new Industrial Division, headed by IUE President Ed Fire. The Industrial Division will be the vehicle to begin organizing thousands of high-tech manufacturing workers and "make sure the new economy is a union economy," says CWA President Morton Bahr.

Praising CWA's recent agreement with Verizon, which includes to ensure card-check at the telecommunications giant's nonunion wireless division, Fire says, "the greatest union achievement today is winning card-check recognition, and CWA showed the way with its historic settlement at Verizon."

"The merger will be a good thing, because we maintain the IUE's identity and we are now a member of a huge organization that can provide more resources for organizing, bargaining and research," says Keith Bailey, president of IUE Local 755 in Dayton, Ohio. "When you go to the bargaining table with the support of 750,000 members, that's something companies will think about."

The new union plans to step up organizing at General Electric, the mammoth corporation bent on keeping its growing operations nonunion. GE is the biggest employer of IUE members, and CWA represents workers at GE's NBC television network. The merger means "our members can have the strongest possible voice, not only at the bargaining table, but in organizing and politics," says Fire. @



Unity: IUE President Ed Fire and CWA President Morton Bahr celebrate a new future as one union.

# Teacher Salaries Still Not Competitive

**A**lthough teacher salaries rose more than 3 percent last year, they still are not sufficiently competitive with other professional salaries to ease the nation's alarming teacher shortage, according to AFT's annual salary survey.

The report, released in July, says the average beginning teacher salary in 1999 was \$26,639. That's not anywhere near the \$44,362 the average engineering graduate was

offered. And the average teacher (with more than 16 years of experience) makes \$40,574—a far cry from the \$68,294 the average engineer makes.

"New college graduates as well as seasoned teachers are being lured to other professions with handsome salary offers," says AFT President Sandra Feldman, "while the teaching profession often isn't even in the horse race."

The trend threatens efforts to improve education, Feldman says. "Low teacher salaries are putting us on a collision course with the national standards movement," she says. To fill classrooms, school districts are hiring thousands of teachers who aren't fully certified. Some districts, like East Palo Alto, Calif., are recruiting teachers from overseas. Adding to the shortage: growing student enrollment, teacher retirements and efforts to lower class size.

Access the full report at [www.aft.org/research](http://www.aft.org/research). ☐



MICHAEL CAMPBELL

**Better pay:** AFT President Sandra Feldman unveils a report documenting the connection between teacher shortages and low salaries.

## Working Women Vote

**M**obilizing around working family issues, union members and their allies kicked off the countdown to the Nov. 7 elections with Working Women Vote Week, Sept. 18–22. Coordinated by the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department, Working Women Vote 2000 seeks to reach more than 3 million women in actions at more than 10,000 workplaces nationwide.

On Sept. 20 in Portland, Ore., hundreds of working women joined Tipper Gore; state Senator Susan Castillo; Judy O'Connor,

executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council; and AFL-CIO Working Women's Department Director Karen Nussbaum to highlight issues key to working women in the elections and beyond: equal pay, child care, health care and retirement security.

In Cincinnati, where working women discussed get-out-the-vote strategies as part of the Ohio AFL-CIO Working Women's Coalition of Labor Union Women Conference Sept. 25, Gloria Johnson, CLUW president, told conference par-

## Settlement Ends 613-Day Lockout at Kaiser Aluminum

**A**fter a 613-day lockout, more than 2,900 Steelworkers at Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp. began returning to work Sept. 18 at five plants in four states under a new agreement worked out by an arbitrator.

"This has been an epic struggle for our union and the union and environmental movements in the Americas," says David Foster, director of USWA District 11 and chairman of the union's Kaiser Negotiating Committee. "Without the unflagging support of the union movement throughout the country, especially in the Northwest, and the inspirational support of environmental organizations and activists, this day would not have come."

Under the five-year agreement, workers will receive wage increases of \$3.42 an hour, improvements in pensions, and retiree health insurance and protections against subcontracting.

Workers were locked out Jan. 14, 1999, after seeking wage and pension increases and guarantees that their contract would carry over if Kaiser merges or is bought out. The National Labor Relations Board issued a complaint in June against Kaiser, charging that the lockout was unlawful. The board is seeking back pay for the employees for the duration of the lockout—a sum the union estimates at \$337 million.

USWA formed an alliance with environmentalists around the country, and particularly in Humboldt County, Calif., to bring corporate accountability to Kaiser's parent company, Maxxam Inc. The union campaign included shareholder actions and the formation of the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, a coalition of environmental groups and unions, to fight for corporate accountability and fair trade policies. ☐

ticipants women can make a difference in this election.

"Working women's issues will be pivotal in determining who wins the presidential and congressional balloting," she said.

Working Women Vote Week highlights included voter registration efforts by the Michigan State Working Women's Ironing Board Brigade; voter mobilization rallies in Alabama sponsored by the Laborers and the NAACP; and issues round tables in Philadelphia, sponsored by AFT.

Working Women Vote 2000 actions are part of an ongoing series of events the department spearheaded over the past year, bringing together working women, elected officials and



**Reaching out:** Tipper Gore joins working women from Oregon in a Working Women Vote 2000 forum.

policy experts to discuss key issues identified through its 2000 Ask a Working Woman survey, released last March.

For more information, or to download issues fliers, visit [www.aflcio.org/women/wwwvote.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/women/wwwvote.htm). ☐

## Stopping the Hate

More than 300 union, lesbian and gay, religious, civil rights and community activists held a vigil in Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., Sept. 28 to honor the memory of Communications Workers of America Local 2204 member Danny Lee Overstreet. Overstreet was killed and six others were wounded at a Roanoke, Va., gay bar Sept. 22, victims of an apparent hate crime. Participants at the rally, organized by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights' Campaign Against Hate, also demanded that Congress approve a strong new hate crimes law that some Republican lawmakers oppose. @



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

## Building Trades Unions Demand Justice for Temp Agency Workers

**T**he 15 unions in the building and construction trades are revving up their national campaign to give temporary workers a permanent voice at work.

On Oct. 3, hundreds of union members rallied on Wall Street to demand that Labor Ready, one of the largest temp firms that dispatch blue-collar workers, stop taking money out of its workers' pay. Labor Ready, which has more than 800 offices nationwide, charges workers when they use the company's cash machines to get their pay in cash. Building trades councils, alleging this practice is unlawful, have assisted workers in suing Labor Ready in several states.

A coalition of labor unions and community groups is mobilizing for Labor Ready's annual shareholders' meeting on Oct.

25 in Tacoma, Wash. Thousands of activists will send a message that temp workers deserve fair treatment and a voice at work. "We intend to raise critical questions at the shareholders' meeting about how Labor Ready conducts its business," says Ed Sullivan, president of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department.

Union organizers also are gathering signatures on a "Temporary Agency Community Standards Petition," demanding justice for temp workers.

More than 100 building trades councils and local unions in 70 cities and 25 states have participated in the National Temp Campaign, launched in April. For more information, or to add your name to the petition, contact the National Steering Committee at 888-468-8133. @

## OUT FRONT

**I**n a few short weeks, voters are going to decide whether our next president supports workers' freedom to form a union or "right to work for less" laws. We'll determine whether the next Congress invests in Social Security, health care and schools—or in more tax cuts for the rich.

We'll decide whether Silicon Valley billionaire Tim Draper can destroy California's public schools with the vouchers ballot initiative he's driving. And whether Michigan's elected Supreme Court will continue to favor employers over injured workers, as it has in every worker's comp ruling in the past two years. And whether the working family majority in the Texas congressional delegation is gerrymandered into a minority. Whether Colorado is more likely to become a right to work state. Whether Oregon's union families lose their voice in politics.

In so many ways, this is the election of our lives. And to be ready, union volunteers are phone banking, walking precincts, leafleting worksites and talking politics and working family issues. Local union and labor council staff members and leaders are polishing mailing and phone bank lists and e-mailing members—doing whatever it takes to get union household voters the information they need and want before election day (see story, page 12).

All these activists are inspiring examples of people power—the union movement's new politics for new strength. Big Business may outspend unions by 11-to-1 on politics, but our strength is our people—and we have the advantage, if we use it.

As the saying goes, "All politics is local." The big decisions this Election Day are not going to emanate from Washington, D.C., or any government, union or business headquarters. They are going to be made in the homes—and the hearts—of our members, working together to make their towns, states and America more supportive of working families.

For the past three years, the union movement has been crafting a tool that will enhance our ability to work together on such key priorities as political action and organizing: the New Alliance road map for restructuring and creating greater unity at the state and local levels. The hundreds of national and local union leaders and state and local labor council officials who already are reshaping the movement in New York, North Carolina and Maryland/Washington, D.C.—and thousands more who will follow in other areas—will be able to capitalize on the new strength that comes from well-deployed people power and multiunion solidarity.

Union household voters are a powerhouse today. Tomorrow, we'll be even more so. Any politician looking to roll back workers' rights or pander to the elite at workers' expense will face masses of very well educated, very well mobilized union household voters.

Today, of course, comes first. In the remaining weeks before Nov. 7, nothing we can do is more important than getting out the working family vote. @

## New Politics, New Strength New Alliance



COURTESY HOUSING INVESTMENT TRUST

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# FOOD OR

HOW THE DRUG INDUSTRY IS SPENDING MILLIONS  
OF DOLLARS TO KEEP PRESCRIPTION PRICES HIGH

BY JANE BIRNBAUM



When Norman Davis' mother, Florence, retired after a lifetime laboring as a beautician and domestic worker, her only income was \$400 a month from Social Security. So Davis, a retired trainer for New York City's Parks Department and member of AFSCME Local 1508, didn't think twice about paying his mother's \$200 monthly bill for eye medication and other prescriptions.

COLIN HAWKINS

# MEDICINE?

And Davis, 75, didn't hesitate to attack high drug prices at Capitol Hill hearings the Clinton administration convened six years ago. "I took one of my mother's eye-drip bottles with me and I held it up," Davis recalls. "I said, 'You see this bottle? It costs \$50, and the stopper alone fills half of it! If not for me, it would be a desperate situation. My mother would have two choices—pay rent and maybe eat, or pay this prescription and not pay the rent or eat.'"

Davis' mother died four years ago. Today, he carries on her legacy by editing a retiree newsletter for AFSCME District Council 37 and counseling other New

York AFSCME retirees, primarily women, living on less than \$1,200 a month.

Because they belong to a union, most of the retirees Davis assists have some prescription drug coverage through their former employers. Such coverage helps supplement Medicare, the federal health insurance program for seniors and people with disabilities, which does not cover the costs of prescription drugs except in health maintenance organizations. But with prescription drug prices increasing 306 percent between 1981 and 1999, and drug spending rising 18.4 percent in 1999, according to the House Democrats' Prescription Drug Task Force, the future for

all seniors is grim unless prescription drug price trends turn around.



What price? AFSCME member Norman Davis holds a photo of his mother, Florence, who depended on his help to buy her medication.

## Top 10 Drugs for Seniors

Top 10 Drugs for Seniors	Used to Treat	U.S. Retail Price	Canadian Retail Price	Mexican Retail Price
<b>Zocor</b> (5 mg, 60)	cholesterol	\$106.84	\$ 43.97	\$ 47.29
<b>Ticlid</b> (250 mg, 60)	stroke	\$112.92	\$ 52.35	\$ 39.61
<b>Prilosec</b> (20 mg, 30)	ulcers	\$105.50	\$ 53.51	\$ 29.46
<b>Relafen</b> (500 mg, 100)	arthritis	\$110.99	\$ 59.55	\$ 49.26
<b>Procardia</b> (30 mg, 100)	heart	\$110.90	\$ 72.82	\$ 87.78
<b>Zoloft</b> (50 mg, 100)	depression	\$195.07	\$124.41	\$155.52
<b>Vasotec</b> (10 mg, 100)	heart	\$ 94.31	\$ 73.42	\$ 57.03
<b>Norvasc</b> (5 mg, 90)	blood pressure	\$109.24	\$ 87.71	\$ 88.08
<b>Fosamax</b> (10 mg, 100)	osteoporosis	\$169.73	\$ 45.01	\$ 51.33
<b>Cardizem</b> (240 mg, 90)	heart	\$162.22	\$142.70	\$ 88.14

Source: National Council of Senior Citizens



# MAINE ACTIVISTS WIN LOWER DRUG PRICES

In Maine, about a quarter of the 1.2 million population—from seniors on Medicare to workers on the job—have no insurance coverage for prescription drugs. Unwilling to wait for federal reform that would give Medicare beneficiaries volume discount prices, Maine Senate Majority Leader Chellie Pingree (D) last May led the passage of ground-breaking state legislation that threatens drug companies with price controls if they do not lower prices for all state residents without coverage.

Joining consumer groups and politicians, SEIU Local 1989 was key in creating Maine's ground-breaking legislation. Retiree activist John Marvin got the ball, or rather, the bus rolling in September 1999, when he gathered a group of New England seniors for a drug-buying trip to Quebec—in Canada, prices for some drugs can cost half as much as they are in the United States. Organized by the National Council of Senior Citizens and financed by Local 1989, that trip ultimately became a "60 Minutes" television segment. An estimated 20 million viewers have seen it, which activists believe helped galvanize today's national movement to lower drug prices.

The drug industry is taking aim at Maine. Its trade group filed a massive lawsuit against the legislation. And in mid-August, major drug company SmithKline Beecham stopped supplying Maine's primary drug wholesaler, so most Maine drugstores now must get that company's products from Connecticut, according to Local 1989 President Brenda Kaler. Activists now are asking legislators to pledge not to back down from the bill that passed with bipartisan support. Says Pingree: "Overall, it appears that the shiny-shoed drug lobbyists who flew into Maine on charter jets last spring have found our politicians a flintier bunch than those in Washington, D.C." ☐



JOHN GRAHAM

**Leading the way: SEIU Local 1989 President Brenda Kaler attacks drug companies' newspaper ads the day Maine's price control bill became law.**

Already, those least able to purchase prescription drugs pay the highest retail prices: the roughly one-third of Medicare beneficiaries currently without prescription drug coverage—some 13 million and rising—and the nation's 45 million without health insurance.

In fact, all American consumers regularly pay up to twice as much as Europeans and Canadians for the same drugs. "Free market competition is supposed to bring prices down, but the only free market for drugs is in the United States, and we have the highest prices," says John Golenski, executive director of RxHealthValue, an alliance of unions, health plans and consumer groups. "Everywhere else, the ministers of health negotiate prices on behalf of the whole population and set price ceilings."

Even animals get better drug prices than U.S. residents. According to a spokesman for Rep. Tom Allen (D-Maine), a one-month supply of the SmithKline Beecham topical antibiotic Bactroban costs \$9.98 for dogs and \$31.56 for humans—a price differential of 216 percent.

And all this is happening as drugs have never been more central to health care delivery. "We are making breathtaking advances in our ability to treat disease pharmacologically," says Golenski. "What we call medicine is increasingly pharmacological care."

The issue of U.S. prescription drug prices has come to the forefront this year through the current debate over how to modernize Medicare by adding a prescription drug benefit. The Democrats' plan, endorsed by presidential candidate Vice

President Al Gore, would add a new drug benefit to Medicare's traditional coverage for medical services and hospitalization.

Pharmaceutical executives provided the well-paid lobbyists to work for passage of the Republicans' pro-drug-industry Medicare plan, H.R. 4680, which passed the House in late June on a 217–214 vote, largely along party lines. Its scheme depends upon the private insurance industry and HMOs, rather than Medicare, to provide drug coverage. Opponents say it would do little to contain drug costs and would leave millions without coverage—if it can work at all. Tellingly, the Health Insurance Association of America, the insurers' trade group, has taken no position on H.R. 4680. And its president, Charles Kahn III, a longtime GOP congressional staffer, told Congress in July that rapidly escalating drug prices would make private drug coverage difficult to price and that its costs would equal or surpass what most Medicare beneficiaries already pay for drugs.

"History tells us that when it comes to health care, for people who are old or sick, the private market doesn't work—that's why Medicare was started in the first place," says Diane Archer, president of the Medicare Rights Center. "Insurers can't make money providing affordable coverage to these populations," she says. "A private insurance mechanism defies logic."

"In the 'Flo' ads [which feature a senior citizen actress announcing she doesn't want government in her medicine cabinet], the pharmaceutical companies were in effect saying a Medicare drug benefit would mean price controls that would ensue," says George Kourpias, president of the National Council of Senior Citizens. "And they are quite right."

The drug industry is the most profitable in the world: In 1999, the top 12 companies netted \$27.3 billion—the equivalent of \$100 for every man, woman and child in the United States, according to Public Citizen. The drug industry has used its enormous financial clout to block a comprehensive Medicare drug benefit, according to Frank Clemente, director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch. In a report this summer, Public Citizen found that pharmaceutical companies and manufacturers spent \$236 million between 1997 and 1999 to deploy an army of Washington lobbyists, many former Capitol Hill

staffers. Since July 1999, drug companies have spent \$65 million on television advertising—including the “Flo” campaign—and untold millions more on radio, phone banking and print communication. Between 1997 and the end of 2000, Public Citizen projects, drug companies will have given approximately \$23 million to political campaigns and parties, 80 percent of it to Republicans.

While the campaign coffers of Republican lawmakers willing to do the bidding of drug companies grow fat, so do the wallets of chief executive officers in the pharmaceutical industry. In 1998, the highest-paid drug executive, Bristol-Myers Squibb's chairman and CEO, C.A. Heimbolt Jr., drew \$14 million in salary, according to Standard & Poor's Super 1,500 Index—not including the \$38.3 million in stock options exercised and \$160 million in unexercised stock options.

Volume drug buying by Medicare and large consortiums of unions and employers could put a big dent in costs, according to Golenski. “Volume buying is what the drug industry really fears,” he says. But it would not aid the 45 million Americans with no health insurance and another 19 million with only partial or temporary health coverage, he adds. Many seniors still would be dependent upon family members like Norman Davis—if they were lucky enough to have such support.

Critics may brand price controls as “un-American,” but at least one member of the medical establishment appears unafraid of that charge. In her departing editorial in the June issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, editor Marcia Angell, M.D., wrote that the pharmaceutical industry is important to public health and so heavily subsidized and protected by the government that “its social responsibilities should not be totally overshadowed by profits.” She suggested that a panel of experts should consider whether some form of drug price controls is desirable, and if so, how it might be implemented.

“Just as public utilities are not permitted to charge whatever the traffic will bear, neither should drug companies,” Angell wrote. “It is hard to take seriously the inevitable industry argument that price controls would stifle innovation and frighten investors when profit margins are so great and so much revenue is spent on marketing.” @

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Be a smart drug consumer:** Don't fall for the pharmaceutical industry's marketing to patients and doctors. Prescription generic drugs are the federal government-certified bio-equivalent of their far-costlier brand-name twins, says William Weil, M.D., a managed health care director for Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles and former president of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. Weil, who says he takes generic drugs, says don't shun over-the-counter drugs. For example, many people who take the heavily advertised Prilosec for heartburn easily could use nonprescription Zantac instead, for about half the price, Weil says.
- **Be camera-ready:** Thanks to this year's federal election, the issue of drug prices is a hot-button topic that can attract public attention, if not media coverage. “Get together with friends and neighbors, examine prices in your area's big chain drug stores,” advises George Kourpias, president of the National Council of Senior Citizens.
- **Do your research:** Every union household should take a look at the record of candidates for federal office—president, House and Senate—and ask if they've committed themselves to a good, solid, affordable drug benefit within the Medicare plan, says Kourpias. “Demand that their first order of business in January will be to create and enact such legislation.”
- **Refill that fountain pen:** “A handwritten letter about drug prices sent to a legislator is worth 5,000 pre-printed postcards,” union activist Norman Davis says. Appearing in a politician's office is even better, he advises—for federal legislators, that means making an appointment and going to their district offices, or Washington, D.C. “We take busloads of people there,” he says.
- **Get more information:** Visit [www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity/healthy\\_choices.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity/healthy_choices.htm). @

## BUSH PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN: A BITTER PILL

Presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush each have proposed a prescription drug benefit plan. Through 2004, the Bush plan relies upon state programs that don't yet exist in most states. Middle-income seniors will not be covered. After 2004, Bush proposes private insurance for prescription drug coverage; most beneficiaries would pay 75 percent of the premiums charged by insurers and catastrophic coverage would begin only after a Medicare recipient spent \$6,000. Under Gore's plan, 100 percent of drug expenses exceeding \$4,000 a year would be covered, and most Medicare beneficiaries would pay only a fixed premium of \$25 per month.

### Who is covered?

**Bush plan:** In 2002, the first year of the plan, just over half a million of the 15.2 million Medicare beneficiaries who do not have prescription drug coverage would be covered.

**Gore plan:** Almost all Medicare beneficiaries who do not have coverage in 2002 would be covered.

### Will the plans work?

**Bush plan:** The Bush plan leaves it up to states to develop programs at first, and then insurance companies to develop all market coverage, even though insurers have said that such coverage is not feasible.

**Gore plan:** Experts say discounts of up to 40 percent are expected under Gore's plan, which uses Medicare's bargaining power as a major federal purchaser to negotiate fair prices. @

### How will the plans be financed?

**Bush plan:** State subsidies through 2004.

**Gore plan:** Through Medicare, which will get \$250 billion of the federal budget surplus to pay for the benefit.

Source: AFL-CIO Public Policy Department's analysis of the Gore and Bush prescription drug proposals.



JIM BROZEK/IMPACT VISUALS

# Member- MOBIL

From a distance, political campaigns are glamorous events: balloon-filled rallies and dramatic speeches. Greeting candidates and schmoozing with famous names. Not to mention the Election Night victory parties.

A close-up look at one state shows how union leaders and activists are waging a massive Labor 2000 effort—recruiting volunteers, phone banking, talking one-on-one with co-workers and registering members to vote

BY MIKE HALL



But as Annie Wacker, Labor 2000 coordinator for the Milwaukee County Labor Council says, "You can't get to the victory parties without a lot of real unglamorous scut work."

So, the day after Labor Day, Wacker; Paula Dorsey, AFSCME Local 426's Labor 2000 coordinator; Jean Bleyer, a Labor 2000 volunteer from Smith Steelworkers Local 19806 (an independently affiliated AFL-CIO local union); Jose Bucio of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO; and labor council President John Goldstein began the unglamorous—but critical—work of sorting through huge boxes filled with mailing labels and phone bank and precinct walk lists for the council's 165 local union affiliates.

The labels, lists, a growing roster of worksite coordinators and a nearly day-by-day calendar of Labor 2000 actions are the key elements in the council's Labor 2000 strategy to contact all 60,000 area union members and their families several times before Election Day, Nov. 7.

With Wisconsin identified as one of the Midwestern swing states that could decide the presidential election, and with poll numbers showing a close race there between Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the Milwaukee council's mobilization efforts take on added importance.

Union worksite volunteers like Kenneth Greening from Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 75 recog-

nize Wisconsin's role in the elections and the stakes for working families.

"If Bush gets in, he and his cronies will want to re-institute [former U.S. House Speaker Newt] Gingrich's 'Contract on America.' That's not going to help working families. He's going to go after the unions. They say there could be five Supreme Court vacancies; if Bush gets to appoint those justices, it could set workers back 20 years," says Greening, a plumber for the Department of Public Works at Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport. (See story, p. 20.)



JIM BROZEK/IMPACT VISUALS

# Member ZATION

Because of those high stakes, Greening, who has worked the phones since they were up and running in August and is looking forward to making member-to-member house visits, says, "Anything they want me to do, as many hours as they want, I'll do."

## Contacting every member

Encouraging local unions to mobilize members like Greening is why Wacker, Dorsey, Bleyer, Bucio and Goldstein are breaking apart the two- and three-foot-tall stacks of labels in the council's downtown phone bank room where Wacker explains the goal of the day's work.

"Tomorrow night is a meeting of delegates from local unions, and we'll have a package for each local that has two sets of mailing labels for all their members so they can send two communications [such

as issue fliers] before Election Day. There's also a set of labels of each local's members who are not registered to vote, and those members will get a letter from their local encouraging them to register and a registration application." In addition to the labels and lists, each package also will include an outline of a letter that stresses the importance of the election for working families, a letter that local union leaders can adapt and send to their members and a sample article for the locals' newsletters that describes the position of each candidate on important working family issues.

When union members at the worksite hear from other union members about working family issues and learn where candidates stand on those issues, two things happen—they are more likely to get to the ballot box on Election Day, and by an overwhelming majority, they will cast those ballots for working family-friendly candidates. In the 1998 congressional elections, when unions increased member-to-member contact as part of the AFL-CIO's Labor '98 campaign, union households cast 23 percent of the votes, yet were just 17 percent of the voting age population. In addition, union members who received worksite fliers cast 76 percent of their votes for working family candidates.

"Making things easier for the locals by providing these materials is just one part of what we're doing," Wacker says. "Member-to-member, one-on-one at the worksite, is the heart and soul of what we're doing."

## One-on-one at the worksite

In north Milwaukee, where aging working-class homes share a neighborhood with industrial plants and warehouses, a group of 42 shop stewards, committee members and

JIM BROZEK/IMPACT VISUALS

**Ready, willing and able:** Plumbers and Pipe Fitters member Paul Greening volunteers "as many hours as" needed to help mobilize Milwaukee union members.

local officers form the worksite communications core at Tower Automotive, a sprawling auto parts plant that makes components for trucks and sport utility vehicles.

"We want to break it down to one-on-one, because talking about issues and candidates really works better on the shop floor when people hear it from someone they know," says Duane McConville, Steelworkers Local 19806 president.

On a sunny September afternoon, Local 19806 members Bleyer, Alan Walker and Evelyn Holmes join Wacker and Mike Balistriere, AFL-CIO community services liaison in Milwaukee, at one of Tower's plant gates at shift change. As workers enter and leave on foot, in cars and on motorcycles, their co-workers hand them fliers describing Gore's and Bush's stands on the right of workers to a voice at work. Several workers entering the plant, and about a half-dozen workers driving through the grounds on forklifts and other equipment, ask for stacks of fliers to hand out to colleagues inside the plant, where McConville says the majority of the local's one-on-one mobilization takes place.

Back downtown, at the Milwaukee County Public Library, Dorsey points to



Step right up: Anne Wacker (left), Milwaukee County Labor Council Labor 2000 coordinator, and other Labor 2000 volunteers distribute working family candidate posters, fliers, buttons and other information to the nearly 15,000 union members at the city's annual Labor Day Parade (above left) and Labor Fest.

**Labor**  
**AFL-CIO 2000**



JIM BROZEK/IMPACT VISUALS

**Gatekeeper:** Alan Walker (above), a Smith Steelworkers Local 19806 member and Labor 2000 volunteer, helps mobilize Tower Automotive workers for the fall election. At right (L-R), Anne Wacker, CLC President John Goldstein and Jose Bucio of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO begin sorting the tens of thousands of mailing labels and phone, voter and walk lists instrumental in getting out the vote.

**“Everything that goes on in Washington comes back to you, and it’s going to make a big difference who’s in charge.”**

—**Greg Gorcki, president, PACE International Union Local 7-232**

workers' efforts there as another example of unions' get-out-the-vote mobilization.

"We've got more than 15 worksites, and using shop stewards and volunteer activists, we're going to talk with everybody, face to face, four or five times before the election and do everything we can to get them to the polls," says Dorsey, who also serves as AFSCME Council 48 president and coordinator of a community coalition voter mobilization effort called Operation Big Vote.

Press operator Paul Wilant, the Labor 2000 coordinator at the library, has been busy recruiting volunteers to help distribute the seven weekly issues fliers the council began sending to local unions Sept. 11.

Security for your parents or making education better for your kids or the Patients' Bill of Rights so a doctor, not some HMO or insurance company, will decide what kind of medical care you get."

While it may seem like a daunting task for local union coordinators to distribute information on issues, recruit volunteers, register voters and get them to polls, Wacker developed a week-by-week calendar that in October became day-by-day through the elections. The calendar, marked with important but specific goals, is intended "to make this as undaunting as possible," she explains.

"In September and October, we want to make sure the weekly issues fliers get out. We ask local union coordinators to recruit



"We want to make sure people are registered to vote and know about the issues. If they ask me, 'Why?' I tell them it's pretty simple: Gore is for working families, and Bush is for the top 1 percent," Wilant says.

Working families need to know how important their votes are in promoting a working families agenda, says Greg Gorcki, president of PACE International Union Local 7-232 in Milwaukee. He says the message his union's Labor 2000 worksite coordinators and activists will get out to the 2,900 PACE members at Briggs & Stratton and StraTec plants sums up the point of the entire Labor 2000 campaign: "It does matter if you vote."

"Everything that goes on in Washington comes back to you, and it's going to make a big difference who's in charge," Gorcki says. "It might be strengthening Social

two volunteers a week for phone banking, member-to-member contacts or our knock-and-drop precinct walking. Two people is do-able, and if you multiply that by a bunch of unions, that's a lot of people. In November, it's GOTV phoning and GOTV member-to-member contact at work," Wacker says.

Labor council President Goldstein says the work Wacker and the local unions are doing serves two purposes: building to win on Nov. 7 and building to last.

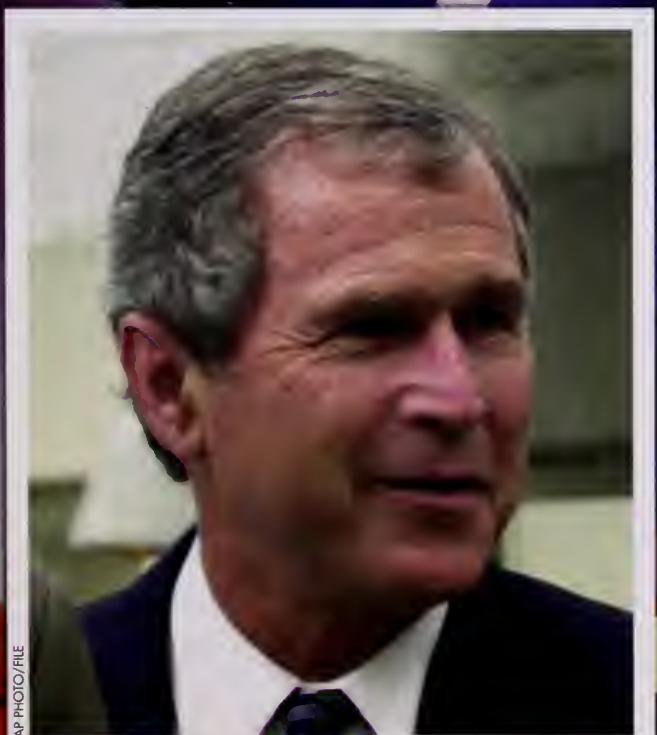
"We want to establish a really effective internal communications system and a lasting base of union activists, something the locals and we can count on for a mobilization, whether it's a contract issue, a community fight like living wage and, of course, for elections."

"When the next election rolls around, we don't want to have to reinvent the wheel." ■

# Where Will the Next President Stand on Workers' Right to a Voice at Work?



CORBIS



AP PHOTO/FILE

The next president of the United States will support and strengthen the rights of workers to choose unions—or he will back so-called right to work laws. He will be a staunch pro-worker, pro-union president—or a chief of state who seeks to silence the voice of working families and their unions through so-called paycheck protection measures.

The next president will be either Vice President Al Gore, who has a strong track record of supporting workers and their unions, or Texas Gov. George W. Bush, who seeks to make the “right to work for less” the law of the land.

“The right to organize is a basic American right. It must never be blocked. It must never be stopped. It must never be taken away,” Gore told delegates to the 1999 AFL-CIO Biennial Convention in Los Angeles. “Let me tell you what I’ll do as president: With your help, if they send any anti-union bill to my desk, I’ll ink up that veto pen and I’ll hit them right between the eyes with a veto. You can count on that.”

## Bush: An agenda to silence working families

Bush supports proposals that would make it more difficult for workers to join unions. If elected president, Bush would:

- Support “paycheck protection” to silence the voice of workers and their unions.
- Encourage passage of a federal right to work for less law.
- Support federal bills that would create “company unions” and limit who can join unions.

In 1995, Bush vetoed a dues check-off bill for municipal workers, calling it “contrary to the principles of right to work.” He strongly backs reactionary “right to work” laws, telling GOP Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating in 1999, “I can tell you why you’re [the state] so poor—you don’t have right to work [and] you have high workers’ comp.”

Bush’s Texas Department of Economic Development brags on its website about the state’s anti-union stand: “Texas is a right to work state, with low unionization of the workforce.”

Eager for a battle that will rally his ultraconservative base, Bush has made a “paycheck protection” scheme aimed at crippling unions “a top priority,” according to his own platform.

At the same time, Bush’s campaign finance reform proposal would continue to allow “soft money” contributions from wealthy individuals—while silencing working families. “I’m for the abolishment of all labor union soft money,” Bush told “The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer” in February.

## Gore: A pro-union plan

Gore plans to back up his strong support for a voice at work for all workers with a detailed pro-union agenda. As president, Gore would:

- Work for tougher penalties for employers who interfere with workers seeking to join a union.
- Seek to reform the nation’s labor laws to protect workers’ rights and to create a more level playing field between workers and management.
- Support banning the use of permanent replacement workers during labor disputes.

Gore promises to veto any “company union” legislation, such as the TEAM Act backed by Bush allies in Congress, that would deny workers the right to pick their own workplace representatives. The bill passed the Senate in 1996 and has been part of the GOP’s Big Business agenda ever since.

“I’m going to keep standing up and speaking out about the importance of unions and the right to organize,” Gore said. “A strong labor movement helps all working Americans.” ☐

Sources: *The Associated Press*, Sept. 6, 1999; [www.al Gore2000.com](http://www.al Gore2000.com); answer to Texas Federation of Teachers 1998 questionnaire; 1995 veto message of S.B. 823; *Tulsa World*, Feb. 17, 1999; [www.tded.state.tx](http://www.tded.state.tx); and *The New York Times*, March 20, 1998.

# ‘Where Is the Justice?’



**Denied justice: Workers at Stemilt Growers in Washington State fought anti-union employer tactics for years before winning a voice at work with the Teamsters.**

By LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

## H

xhausted and burned out by taking care of as many as 20 patients a day while making poverty-level wages, certified nursing assistants at the Palm Garden Nursing Home in North Miami began coming together to form a union with the Unite for Dignity campaign, a joint project of UNITE and SEIU. In response, management launched a vicious anti-union assault. Not only did company officials threaten wage and benefit cuts if workers voted for the union; they also threatened to stop helping workers fill out food stamp applications. Wages were so low, many of the employees qualified for government assistance.

Managers fired a key pro-union leader shortly before the election—based on backdated warning notices with forged signatures, according to findings by the National Labor Relations Board. Workers narrowly lost the election in April 1996. The NLRB has ordered a new election and reinstatement of fired workers, but the company still is delaying action, appealing the ruling to a federal court.

**Voice@Work: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (center) and union members and allies rallied in June with Florida workers seeking to join a union.**



LEN KAMINSKY

## *U.S. workers often are denied the freedom to choose a union, an international human rights group finds*



**Shining a spotlight: The AFL-CIO's Voice@Work campaign is fighting to ensure workers are free to join a union.**

"Where is the justice?" asks Marie Sylvain, one of the fired workers. "Everything is at the boss's advantage with all these delays."

Sylvain's story is one of several compiled in a new report by the nonprofit Human Rights Watch, *Unfair Advantage: Workers' Freedom of Association in the United States Under International Human Rights Standards*, released Aug. 31. It is the first time an international human rights organization has examined union organizing in the United States. "The report asks whether our 65-year-old legal system affords workers basic internationally recognized human

rights at work," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "Sadly but not surprisingly, Human Rights Watch concludes that it's not even a close call," he says.

"Many workers who try to form and join trade unions to bargain with their employers are spied on, harassed, pressured, threatened, suspended, fired, deported or otherwise victimized in reprisal for their exercise of the right to freedom of association," the report says. "Freedom of association is a right under severe, often buckling, pressure when workers in the United States try to exercise it."

Like the AFL-CIO Voice@Work campaign, the report shines a spotlight on egregious employer behavior and the hurdles that workers face when they try to come together to form unions—workers such as those at Stemilt Growers in Wenatchee, Wash. There, the apple warehouse company tried to squelch organizing efforts by hiring a union-busting consultant who made veiled, indirect references to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. One worker, who now is a permanent U.S. resident, told the NLRB he began working at the company in 1991 when he was undocumented. At captive-audience meetings led by managers and the consultant, "they talked most about the INS," said the worker, speaking to Human Rights Watch on the condition of anonymity. "I assume the company keeps talking about the INS because they know a lot of workers on the night shift are undocumented." It was only after workers mounted their organizing effort that "they have started to threaten us with INS raids," he says. "They know that we are afraid to even talk about this because we don't want to risk ourselves or anyone else losing their jobs or being deported, so it is a very powerful threat."

In January 1998, even though a majority of workers had signed union cards, the Teamsters lost the election at Stemilt. But the union took its case to the NLRB and won. Finally, Stemilt said it would settle the unfair labor practice case through the card-check recognition process, in which the employer agrees to recognize the union if a majority of workers sign union cards. Last November, workers chose a voice on the job with the Teamsters, and bargaining began this year.

In another Miami nursing home, Villa Maria, a supervisor infiltrated a union meeting by signing a union card with a false name and spied on workers, reporting attendance back to management, according to the findings of an administrative law judge. Management instructed

## Public Opinion Opposes Employer Tactics to Deny Workers a Voice

Public opinion opposes employer tactics to thwart workers: 74 percent say employees should be free to make a choice without interference by management, according to a 1999 survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. But two-thirds of those polled said they hadn't been aware that employers prevent workers from exercising their freedom to choose a union. When community groups begin to support campaigns, says Jim Sala of the Carpenters, "a lot more people and groups get involved. It gives the workers a boost, and policymakers see their local ministers and their neighbors standing with workers."

Strengthening the ties between unions and communities can build the support needed to change U.S. labor laws along the lines recommended by Human Rights Watch, including:

- Encouraging the use of card-check agreements;
- Extending the freedom to organize to workers currently excluded, such as independent contractors, some government employees and many agricultural workers;
- Outlawing the permanent replacement of striking workers; and
- Prohibiting inquiries into a worker's immigration status during NLRB proceedings. ☐

some supervisors to stand on the roof of the nursing home to observe workers going into a nearby restaurant to meet with union representatives. Even though a majority of workers had signed cards earlier indicating they wanted a union, after management's maneuvering, the union narrowly lost the election. The NLRB ordered a new election, but the company is appealing its decision.

Meanwhile, at the Cabana Potato Chips plant in northwest Detroit, many employees were women coming off welfare. The workers began organizing with Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 326 in September 1998, when the company didn't include holiday pay for Labor Day in their paychecks. As part of the company's anti-union campaign, managers threatened to close the plant, telling workers if they went on strike, they could be permanently replaced. Although 70 percent of the workers signed cards indicating support for the union, they knew they could lose their food stamps, medical insurance and child care subsidies if they went on strike. The union lost the election but hopes to hold another early next year, according to BCTGM Local 326 Secretary-Treasurer Mary Peterson.

The AFL-CIO's Voice@Work campaign is fighting to restore the balance needed to protect the right of workers such as those at Stemilt and Palm Garden to make a free choice to join a union. Unions are shining

a spotlight on abuses by employers and mobilizing workers, elected officials and their allies in community and religious groups to change the environment in which fierce employer hostility has become routine.

**F**or example, the Las Vegas Interfaith Council on Worker Justice is working with the Southern California-Nevada Regional Council of Carpenters to bring attention to the abuses faced by workers in the city's booming construction industry. Two years ago, a group of ministers visited job sites where workers for Precision Concrete were denied breaks and water on 110-degree days. The organization created a code of ethics for employers and published a "black book" listing employers who fought to deny workers a voice on the job. "The workers are happy there are other people around who care about them," says Jim Sala, director of organizing for the Carpenters' council. Conditions and pay have improved at Precision, although the company is still fighting workers' organizing efforts. "When they see people defending their rights," says Sala, "it makes their resolve all that much stronger, and they become really active."

In the face of what the report calls the "culture of near-impunity" for employers that pervades U.S. labor law and practice, millions of workers struggle to get respect on the job and a voice at work. In 1980, Marriott and the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 2 agreed to hold a card-check at the new hotel the company was building in San Francisco. But "20 years and a series of judges, mediators and arbitrators later...the company's reneging on its agreement has never been redressed," the report says. It took a breach-of-contract lawsuit to finally force Marriott to hold a card-check in 1996, which the union won. But despite the card-check victory, the company persisted in its anti-union tactics, firing key pro-union workers and bargaining only sporadically, according to the report.

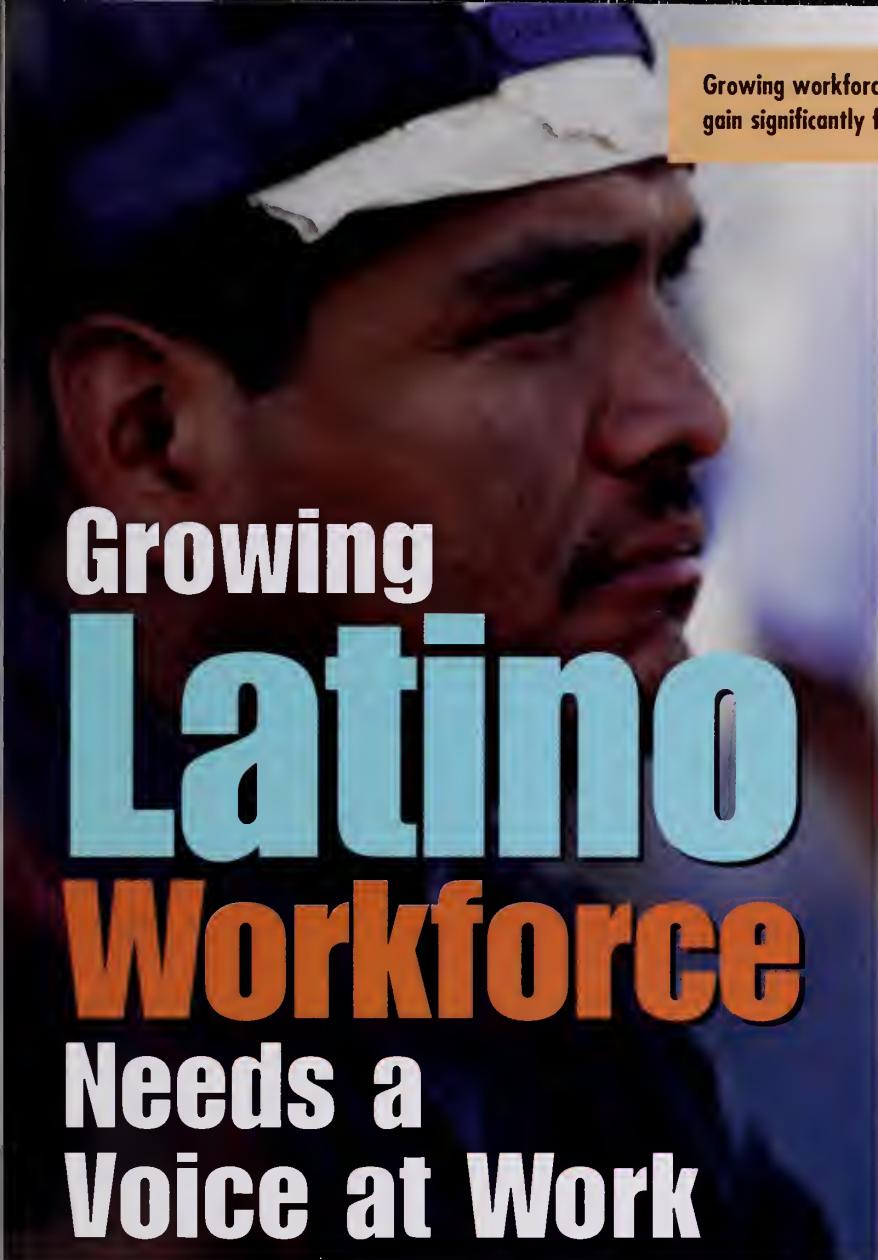
Grover Sanchez was one of the workers fired because of his support for the union. He since has found a job with the new W Hotel in San Francisco, which agreed in May 1999 to hold a card-check. A local priest verified that a majority of workers chose to form a union with Local 2, and workers and the hotel hammered out an agreement.

"With the contract, it's better," Sanchez told Human Rights Watch interviewers. "The worker is more respected. You feel more secure."

*Unfair Advantage: Workers' Freedom of Association in the United States Under International Human Rights Standards*, can be accessed at [www.hrw.org/reports/2000/uslabor](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/uslabor). Copies cost \$15 and can be ordered from Human Rights Watch Publications Dept., 350 5th Ave., 34th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10118; phone: 212-216-1813. To order online, go to <http://store.yahoo.com/hrwpubs/unadworfreed.html>. ☐

### Elections, NLRB-Style

What would a U.S. congressional race look like if it had the same rules as a National Labor Relations Board election? Find out at the AFL-CIO's new online comic book, starring Vivian Voice as the candidate trying to battle ridiculous hurdles and delays, at [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/elect2000.swf](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/elect2000.swf).



Growing workforce: Latino workers stand to gain significantly from joining unions.

# Growing Latino Workforce Needs a Voice at Work

VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER

**W**ith \$350 billion in annual purchasing power, Latinos are increasing their share of the middle class and are making significant contributions to the nation's economy. But economic restructuring and the trend toward low-paying jobs have hurt Latino workers, according to a new study, *Moving Up the Economic Ladder: Latino Workers and the Nation's Future Prosperity*, released by the National Council of La Raza, the national umbrella organization of 230 Hispanic organizations.

"Latinos have a strong foothold in today's economy. They have emerged as one of the most significant components behind the country's economic growth," says La Raza President Raul Yzaguirre. Latino men, for example, have the highest labor force participation rate of any group of workers.

One of the fastest growing groups of new workers, the number of Latinos in the workforce will grow by up to 3.1 percent a year. By 2004, they could be the largest minority group in the country. By 2006, more than 17.4 million Latinos will be in the U.S. job market, 11.7 percent of the workforce.

Yet, changes in the economy, discrimination and a lack of education and skills training have hindered Latino economic progress, the study says. Unless these factors are turned around for all workers, especially Latinos, the overall productivity and economic growth of the United



VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER

States will slow or even decrease, according to the study.

The key to boosting income is union membership, says Oscar Sanchez, executive director of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement. LCLAA, an AFL-CIO constituency group, is a national Latino trade union association representing 1.5 million Latino working men and women in 43 international unions.

Latinos are the least likely of all workers to be members of unions, but stand to gain significantly from the increased wages and benefits union membership offers: Workers covered by union contracts are 1.5 times more likely to have health insurance than nonunion workers, the report says. Recent figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show that one in three Latinos does not have health insurance.

Among all workers, union members earn on average 32 percent higher wages. But for Latinos, the union difference is 54 percent. Yet employers often create huge obstacles when Latino workers seek a voice at work, Sanchez says.

When Latino workers at Goya Foods in Miami, Fla., voted for UNITE two years ago, managers threatened, harassed and fired union supporters and refused to bargain. The violations were so egregious that in June, the National Labor Relations Board sought a rare injunction to force the company to negotiate—and the workers still don't have a contract.

U.S. employers also have a long history of exploiting fear among workers to make them work long hours, often in poor conditions and for low wages. Today, they use the threat of turning in Latino workers to the Immigration and Naturalization Service to try and prevent them from joining a union. In Minneapolis last October, managers at the Holiday Inn Express turned in eight Latino workers to the INS after they voted for the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees.

To address abuses such as those in Minneapolis and across the nation, the AFL-CIO Executive Council in February called for a new immigration system that is orderly, responsible and fair, and urged amnesty for about 6 million undocumented workers and their families who are contributing to their communities (see "Recognizing Our Common Bonds," May 2000 *America@work*).

The La Raza report also calls for changes in public policies that inhibit union organizing, especially the way in which laws against hiring undocumented workers are enforced. And it urges Latino organizations to become more active in efforts to remove barriers to union organizing.

"These policies should be reformed, not only because they benefit Latino workers, but also because all workers in these low-wage sectors would benefit from collective bargaining," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. "Union membership helps everybody. When workers earn more in wages and benefits, that translates into more money being pumped into our economy. When workers earn more, they buy more goods and services, which creates more jobs, and they pay more taxes, which help fund better schools and safer neighborhoods." @

—James B. Parks

*Moving Up the Economic Ladder: Latino Workers and the Nation's Future Prosperity*, is available for \$30 through the NCLR Distribution Center, phone: 301-604-7983.

# The Next President Will Determine Whether the Supreme Court Protects or Abandons Workers

**T**he stakes for working families in the 2000 elections extend beyond which party controls Congress and the White House. The new president almost certainly will appoint justices to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in turn could set the course of employment as well as labor law for decades to come.

"The Supreme Court is really the source of American labor law, principally because for the last four decades it has been impossible to get any significant changes out of Congress," says Harvard law professor Paul Weiler. "So who the justices are is important. The troubling thing about our democracy is that five justices appointed for a lifetime decide the rights of ordinary workers."

Republican presidents have appointed seven of the current nine Supreme Court justices and President Clinton the other two. His successor probably will appoint at least two, and as many as four, new justices. As the court convenes this month, four of the justices will be more than 65 years old, one of them more than 80. All four senior members of the court, including the chief justice, have experienced serious health problems.

Because the court is so closely divided, often voting 5-4 in key decisions, any new appointees will tip the balance of power. Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush already has said he would nominate justices with views similar to those of current justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, the court's two most anti-worker members. Scalia and Thomas have a "remarkably consistent record" of opposing workers' interests, according to



## The Next President Will Determine Whether the Supreme Court Protects or Abandons Workers

Ralph Neas, president of People for the American Way. "Between them, Scalia and Thomas have written the majority opinion for the Court in some nine cases in which claims made by the employees were sufficiently strong to divide the court. In every case, they came down against the workers. The voting records of Scalia and Thomas in other employment cases in which they did not get to write the majority are equally one-sided," Neas says. Democratic candidate Vice President Al Gore has said he would name more mainstream justices.

Legal scholars agree that a Bush Supreme Court could:

- Roll back workers' right to organize by siding with employers and classifying more workers as "independent contractors" instead of employees. Many employers now classify full-time employees as independent contractors to escape paying benefits and to prevent union organizing.

A Bush court also might restrict union access to employees on the employer's premises and make it easier for an employer to withdraw recognition of a union.

- Limit working families' political freedom by expanding the rules defining which union activities are "political" and by giving support to so-called paycheck

protection schemes that place heavy regulations on unions—requiring members to sign written permission slips each year before their dues could be used for political and legislative activities.

- Undercut the right of workers to go to court to pursue judicial and administrative remedies for violations of employment laws and force them to seek relief only through arbitration.

- Deny labor rights to employees with professional and technical expertise, who to a limited extent direct others, by classifying them as supervisors and excluding them from the protections of the National Labor Relations Act, the basic law governing labor relations.

- Prevent state workers from suing in federal or state court to recover back pay for overtime, or for violations of the Equal Pay Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act.

At the National Labor Relations Board, the federal agency that enforces the country's basic labor laws, the impact of presidential appointments could be even more immediate. The next president will nominate all five members and the general counsel, who investigates and prosecutes cases of unfair labor practices.

A Bush NLRB, for example, certainly would have voted differently in the recent *M.B. Sturgis* case in which the board extended to temporary workers the right to join a union without permission from the agency that employs them. Members casting the three votes supporting the decision were all appointed by Clinton.

"The future of the Supreme Court makes this the most important election since 1932 [when Franklin Roosevelt was elected]," Neas says. "Adding one or two more right-wing justices to the court could lead to the curtailment or abolition of some basic rights. For workers, it could mean that workers' rights are not just cut back for four years, but for 40 years." @

—James B. Parks

## Giving Nike a Run for Its Money

**H**ere's an Olympic opening ceremony most people didn't get to see: While the combined Australian Trade Union choir sang, workers pulled a Nike shoe the size of a small car, urged on by a whip-wielding character representing Nike.

One of the speakers at the Sept. 11 ceremony was Jim Keady, a former assistant soccer coach and graduate student at St. John's University in New York—who recently lived the life of a Nike sweatshop worker making \$1.25 a day in Indonesia.

Keady moved temporarily to Indonesia after he was forced to resign his position as soccer coach for his involvement in protests against the university's relationship with Nike and his refusal to wear the equipment Nike provided for the athletic teams.

Under the auspices of the Olympic Living Wage Project, sponsored by the anti-sweatshop advocacy group Press for Change, Keady posted his daily journal on the Olympic Living Wage website, [www.nikewages.org](http://www.nikewages.org). On Aug.

15, after more than a month living on a sweatshop wage, he wrote: "I am hungry and tired; my back is killing me from sleeping on a mat on a hard cement floor; my head aches with a constant dull pain from lack of food...."

Keady's stay also enabled him to do firsthand reporting: "We...interview[ed] workers from PT Lintas, a Nike factory in Bekasi. I had read the accounts—I had written a research paper about it—but today I received the unedited truth from two courageous young women about the reality of the workers' labor situation. To give you the short of it, Nike is lying or distorting the truth about every labor issue here in Indonesia."

Keady plans to continue the struggle for justice for sweatshop workers through a 10-week speaking tour and by producing documentary footage and two books. Also in the works: creation of a new organization, Educating for Justice, that will include a cooperatively managed company to manufacture soccer equipment for the United States and Indonesia. @

## Can't Play Games with Union Elections

**E**mployers looking to raffle off the years of ill will their actions have created among workers no longer can do so on the day of a union election. On Aug. 14, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that employers cannot hold raffles the same day as workers vote on joining a union. The ruling came after Atlantic Limousines in New Jersey offered a \$350 color television and videocassette recorder as a prize in a raffle held in the same building where a representation vote for Teamsters Local 331 was taking place. The flier announcing the raffle—which company officials said they launched to "get out the vote"—noted \$350 is "approximately equal in value to what your union dues and initiation fees could be for the first year." No wonder the NLRB said "No dice." @

## Marketplace of Ideas?

**U**niversities are supposed to cultivate the free exchange of ideas. But that's not always the case, as some AFT activists found out during their convention this July in Philadelphia. When a contingent of 50 delegates and teaching assistants attempted to deliver a resolution in support of Temple University graduate students who are struggling to form a union, guards at the administration building initially prevented them from entering the building.

"No public university should ever bar anyone from exercising their First Amendment right of speech," said AFT Secretary-Treasurer Edward McElroy, standing on the steps.

Student workers are seeking to hold a union election, but the school is mounting legal challenges.

Eventually, the guards allowed a member of the faculty union, Temple Association of University Professionals/AFT, and a graduate teaching assistant to deliver the resolution. @



**Higher education:** AFT members took time out from the union's convention to support Temple University students seeking a voice at work.

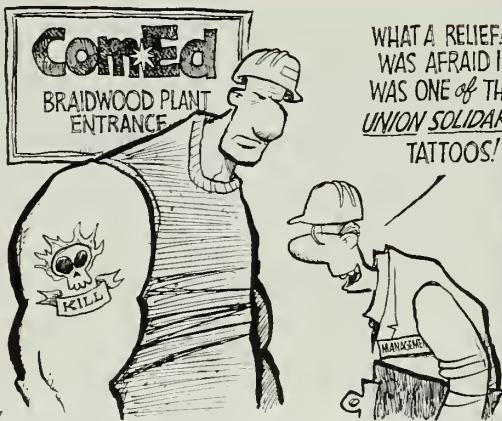
## Tattoo Meltdown

**M**eltdown" used to be the most feared word nuclear plant managers could hear.

But in Illinois, what most terrifies nuclear plant managers are "tattoos"—especially those that say "Solidarity in Unity" and "Local 15."

Commonwealth Edison, owner of five Illinois nuclear plants, has ordered scores of its control room employees, members of Electrical Workers Local 15, to wash off the temporary tattoos they began wearing Aug. 25 to protest ComEd's insistence on a two-tier pension program. When workers refused, managers declared they were being "insubordinate," had them escorted from the plant, docked a day's pay—and warned them their jobs were at risk.

Managers said the tattoo, measuring 1.5 by 1.75 inches, could be a "distraction" in the control room—evidently even more so than the T-shirts, hats and buttons with messages



identical to the tattoo that the local's 7,500 members at ComEd have worn throughout the pension negotiations.

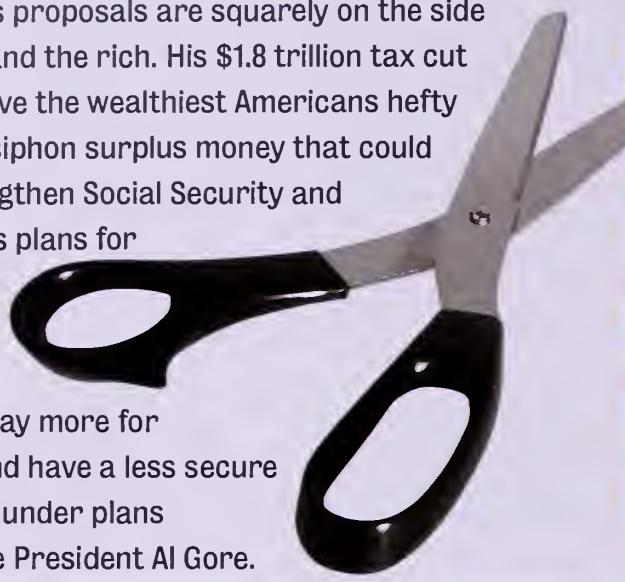
"Well over 100 people have gotten a day off for wearing this tattoo," says Nick Citta, senior assistant business manager for Local 15. A worker sporting a hairstyle that featured the number 15 on the side of his head was suspended and had to get another haircut before he was allowed back in the plant, Citta says.

Local 15 has filed unfair labor practice charges against ComEd with the National Labor Relations Board, seeking immediate relief from the tattoo ban and the company's barring of Local 15 representatives from its plants, says Citta. @

# DUBYA'S

## Schemes Am-Bush Workers

When it comes to pocketbook issues, presidential candidate George W. Bush's proposals are squarely on the side of Big Business and the rich. His \$1.8 trillion tax cut scheme would give the wealthiest Americans hefty tax breaks and siphon surplus money that could be used to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. Bush's plans for Social Security and Medicare also mean workers would pay more for medical costs and have a less secure retirement than under plans proposed by Vice President Al Gore.



### Workers' Retirement at Risk in Bush Social Security Plan

**If you're this old today...**

**28**

**38**

**48**



**-54% -39% -29%**

**...you'll lose this much under the Bush plan**

Source: The Century Foundation.

### Less Coverage, More Costs Under Bush Prescription Drug Plan

2002	Gore	Bush
Currently uninsured who will benefit	15.2 million 100 percent	500,000–600,000 3.3 percent
Currently uninsured who will benefit from catastrophic drug protection	6.5 percent	0.2 percent
Beneficiaries with catastrophic drug protection	18.4 percent	0.2 percent
2008	Gore	Bush
Currently uninsured who will benefit	17.8 million 100 percent	5.8 million 32.6 percent
Currently uninsured who will benefit from catastrophic drug protection:	11.8 percent	1.1 percent
Beneficiaries with catastrophic drug protection	28.7 percent	15.2 percent

Comparison of Gore and Bush Medicare Outpatient Prescription Drug Proposals, 2002 and 2008.  
Source: Kenneth Thorpe, Emory University (analysis reflects author only, not Emory University).

### The Rich Get Richer With Bush's Tax Cuts

Income Group	Income Range	Average Annual Income	Average Tax Cut	% of Total Tax Cut
Lowest 20%	Less than \$ 13,600	\$ 8,600	\$ -42	0.8%
Second 20%	\$ 13,601–24,400	18,800	-187	3.5%
Middle 20%	\$ 24,401–39,300	31,100	-453	8.4%
Fourth 20%	\$ 39,301–64,900	50,700	-876	16.2%
Next 15%	\$ 64,901–130,000	86,800	-1,447	20.1%
Next 4%	\$ 130,001–319,000	183,000	-2,253	8.4%
Top 1%	\$ 319,001 or more	915,000	-46,072	42.6%

The Bush plan costs \$1.8 trillion over 10 years. Estimates exclude expanded Education Savings Accounts. Tax changes are shown fully effective at 1999 levels.

Source: Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy Tax Model.

## PUBLICATIONS

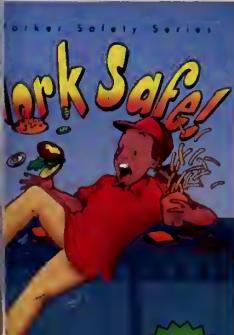


**Disposable Domestic Workers in the Global Economy**, by Grace Chang, explodes the misperception of immigrant workers as a drain on the nation's resources. In documenting the vital role immigrant women play in the U.S. economy, Chang demonstrates that government and business benefit by depicting immigrants as welfare abusers who

don't deserve government benefits—and by denying them aid, effectively coerce them into low-wage jobs. Chang says developed nations require less-developed nations to dismantle their social programs to secure loans from such organizations as the International Monetary Fund, effectively forcing women in those less-developed countries to leave their homelands. \$40 clothbound and \$18 paperback. South End Press; phone: 617-547-4002; website: [www.lbbs.org/sep/sep.htm](http://www.lbbs.org/sep/sep.htm). See the website for details on bulk order discounts.

**Behind the Label: Inequality in the Los Angeles Apparel Industry**, by Edna Bonacich and Richard P. Appelbaum, details the return of sweatshops to Los Angeles, now the nation's largest apparel production center. The growing anti-sweatshop movement "represents nothing less than an attack on the entire system of global, flexible production and the social inequality and suffering that it is creating," the authors conclude. \$50 clothbound and \$19.95 paperback. University of California Press; phone: 800-UC-BOOKS; website: [www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/8372.html](http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/8372.html). ☐

## GUIDE



**Work Safe! A Guide for Young Workers**, produced by the Institute for Labor and the Community, utilizes short articles, colorful lists and cartoons to inform its targeted audience—ages 14 to 25—about their rights on

## Immigrant Workers' Rights

**Building Understanding, Creating Change: A Report on the AFL-CIO Forums on Immigrant Workers' Rights**, documents the four forums on immigrant workers' rights the federation held this year in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and Atlanta. Based on testimony at the forums, the report describes cases of immigrant worker exploitation and abuse, employer retaliation against workers who seek to assert their rights and examples of workers, unions and community groups coming together to defend immigrant workers' rights.

**Building Understanding, Creating Change** supports recommendations for public policy changes approved by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in February 2000, including a new amnesty program, replacement of employer sanctions and vigorous enforcement of worker protection laws. The report describes how unions can assist immigrant workers and create unity between immigrants and nonimmigrants by building broad-based alliances with community and immigrant groups to defend immigrant rights.

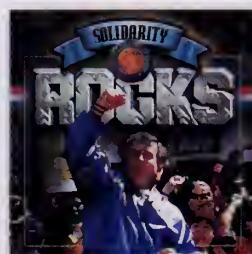
Available in English and Spanish. Contact the AFL-CIO Support Services Dept., 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 800-442-5645 or, in metro Washington, D.C., 202-637-5042. ☐



the job and how to prevent on-the-job injuries. A brief history of child labor shows readers why laws were adopted to protect young workers. The ILC, which worked with young people from unions, community groups and high schools to create the booklet, currently is drafting a trainer's guide to accompany it and has developed a train-the-trainer program to teach young people the basics of *Work Safe!* \$8 each; bulk rates are available. To order, call 212-505-3184; e-mail [ilc@pipeline.com](mailto:ilc@pipeline.com); or send a check to ILC, 541 East 12th St., New York, N.Y. 10009. ☐

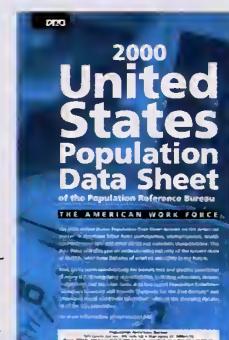
## MUSIC

**Solidarity Rocks**, a 48-minute CD produced by the Steelworkers, features a dozen union songs and includes a three-minute music video of the CD's lead song, "Solidarity Rocks." The music runs from rock to country to ballads, with most of the tunes appealing to a wide union audience. Includes such union hard-hitters as "Save the Children" and "Organize," the uplifting "Men of Steel" and "Building the Dream" and the well-blended "Doggone Shame." \$15. To order, call 412-562-2442. ☐



## WALL CHART

**2000 United States Population Data Sheet**, produced by the nonprofit Population Reference Bureau, shows state-by-state labor force participation, unemployment and other social and economic factors in charts on a 32-by-24-inch poster. Includes sections on the type of jobs women hold, retirement trends, racial makeup of new workers and the education levels of young workers. \$4.50 each (discounts for bulk purchases). To order, call 800-877-9881 or e-mail [popref@prb.org](mailto:popref@prb.org). Orders under \$50 must be prepaid. ☐



## WEBSIGHTING

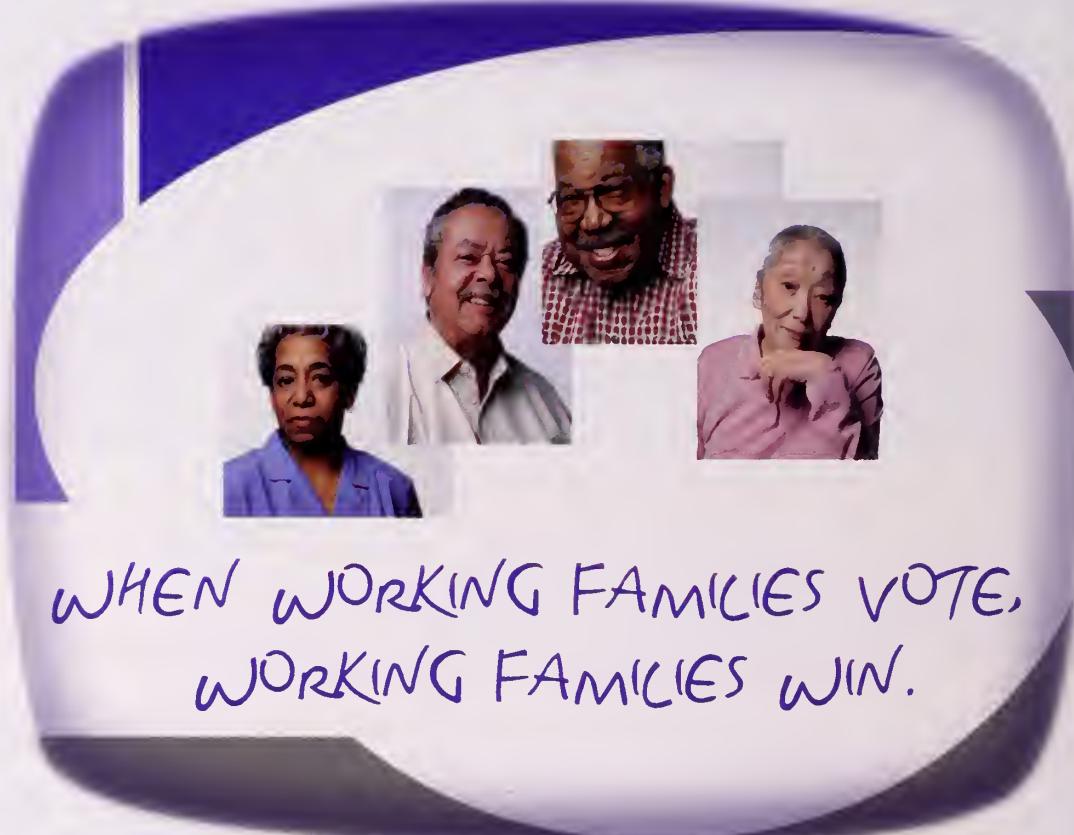
[www.bread-and-roses.com](http://www.bread-and-roses.com)—Bread and Roses Cultural Project, the not-for-profit cultural arm of 1199/SEIU New York's Health & Human Service Union, has launched a website that highlights images from the project's exhibitions, including *Sweatshops and Working*, and details such programs as Arts Education, which trains teachers in how to incorporate art into their daily lessons. The site offers resources and opportunities to purchase Bread and Roses posters, calendars, study guides and videos. ☐

**I told one person to VOTE  
and he told two people to VOTE.  
They told four people to VOTE and those four told  
eight people to VOTE. Then the eight told 16 people  
to VOTE and the 16 told 32 people to VOTE and  
they told 64 people to VOTE...**

## **...AND WE CHANGED AMERICA.**

Start the chain reaction that will improve the lives of working families:

- ✓ Go to [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org), [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) or your union's workingfamilies.com portal.\*
- ✓ Click on the E-VOTE cards button and send an online Get-Out-the-Vote card to everyone in your address book.
- ✓ Urge each of them to send their own E-VOTE cards...
- ✓ And to urge others to send cards...
- ✓ And so on and so on—because:



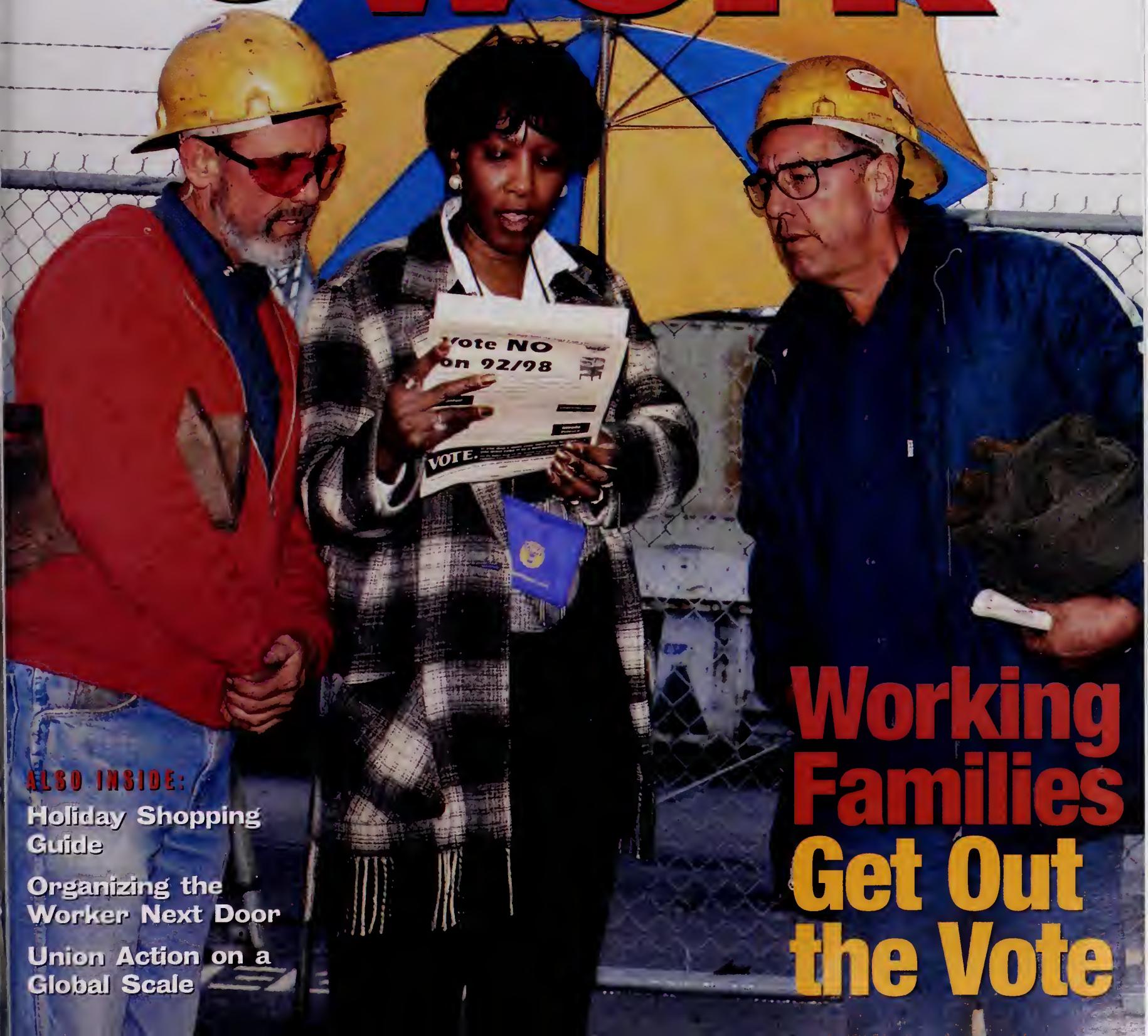
**WHEN WORKING FAMILIES VOTE,  
WORKING FAMILIES WIN.**

\* Go to People-Powered Politics for political news, voter registration, information about candidates' positions and voting records on important working family issues at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) and [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com).

Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2000

# America at Work



## Working Families Get Out the Vote

ALSO INSIDE:

Holiday Shopping Guide

Organizing the Worker Next Door

Union Action on a Global Scale

**"AS A NURSING HOME** advocate, I am concerned over the destruction caused to long-term care by the large corporations such as Beverly Enterprises, Integrated Health and Sunhealth, to name a few. They pay workers poverty-level wages in facilities that are always short-staffed while they have CEOs earning in the millions who, even when asked to step down...take millions of dollars with them. They are well compensated for failing!...All these companies have violated labor laws by threatening and even firing employees wishing to form unions."

—Deborah Winiewicz, Halifax, Mass.

**"I JUST WANTED** to thank the AFL-CIO for your continued support of the SAG/AFTRA commercial strike. Your help is invaluable and much appreciated."—Nathan M. White, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### SAY WHAT?

**What's the best grassroots activity your local union conducted for the November elections?**

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue. *America@work*, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@aflcio.org](mailto:atwork@aflcio.org)

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

#### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS REACHING OUT TO NONMEMBERS IN OPEN SHOPS:

"The best way to encourage new membership is through communications with unrepresented workers and our current membership. No one will join if the union member they know is not aware of the value of his or her membership. You accomplish both! I love the 100 years booklet [January 2000 *America@work*, 100 Years of Struggle and Success], and I am planning to order a second 100 issues."

—Don McQuillan, director of organizing, Elevator Constructors, Southampton, Mass.

**"I WANT TO CONGRATULATE** you on your valiant effort in the election. I have much more respect for your organization. Thank you for putting some of the disagreements that your organization had with Al Gore aside and really fighting for the soul of the Democratic Party. At the same time, I am extremely disappointed with Nader. Without the spoilers in the liberal wing of our party, I believe we could have easily taken the White House. Regardless of the outcome, I believe your organization deserves all the credit for the spectacular effort."—Shan Kang, graduate student, University of California at Los Angeles

**"THE CLEAN LOOK** of the September 2000 cover is a real improvement over the busier style that can make your eyes spin. I hope you keep moving in this direction while you continue to put out this great resource for our movement."—Alan Howard, assistant to the president, UNITE

**"MY QUESTION IS** really more of a concern than a question: Why is it that the majority of workers in this country are working more hours per week than we have in many decades? I have worked in several different industries, and the story is always the same: If you want your job, work the overtime, or the boss will find someone that will. I have not seen any action to force a change in the labor laws to help protect workers in regard to this issue."—Doug Osborne, retired Iron Workers Local 60 member, Syracuse, N.Y.

**AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in *America@work*.**

## America@work

Nov./Dec. 2000 • Vol. 5, No. 11  
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Washington, D.C. 20006  
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**Subscriptions:** \$10/year for 11 issues. Send check to AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, or order with credit card by calling 800-442-5645.

Denise Mitchell (Assistant to the President for Public Affairs); Donna M. Joblonski (Publications Director); Tula Connell (Editor); Jone Birnbaum, Mike Hall, Laureen Lazarovici, James B. Parks (Assistant Editors); Arlee C. Green (Staff Writer); Colleen M. O'Neill (Proofreader/Copy Editor). Design: The Magazine Group Inc.

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ALLEN ZAK PHOTOGRAPHY

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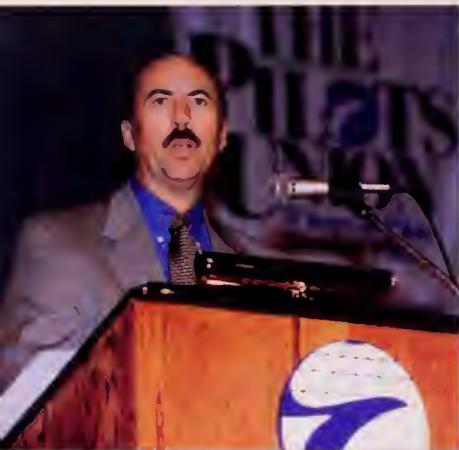
Publication: Rights, Not Roses: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945–80

## Unions Making the Grade at Universities

**T**housands of graduate students who work as research and teaching assistants are making their voices heard by seeking to join unions at more than 20 public institutions nationwide. But until recently, the right of student workers to join a union had not been guaranteed to students at private universities. A Nov. 1 decision by the National Labor Relations

Board, which ruled that 1,700 teaching assistants at New York University have the right to vote for a union, opens the door for students at private universities to organize.

NYU officials refused to recognize a union even after a majority of graduate teaching assistants signed authorization cards for the UAW, and impounded the ballots after an April 25–27 election.



AMY SHIEFEL

**On board: ALPA President Capt. Duane Woerth says a merger of U.S. and Canadian pilots will strengthen the union in a global economy.**

## ALPA Wants Pilots to Fly 'United'

**T**he Air Line Pilots has launched a campaign to unite all airline pilots in the United States and Canada under one union roof, in an effort to strengthen their voice. The Oct. 19 action by ALPA's board of directors is a "watershed event for airline pilots," says Capt. Duane Woerth, ALPA president. The union achieved the first step toward unity when the Canadian ALPA agreed to a merger, and it has held exploratory talks with the pilots at American,

Continental, Continental Express and FedEx. "When the airline industry began to move at a faster pace toward global operations, management began to position themselves to be able to use the divide-and-conquer strategies against individual unions," Woerth says.

ALPA officials say they plan to meet over the next few months with representatives of unaffiliated pilot unions at American Airlines, Continental Airlines and Federal Express Corp. The process is expected to take several months. If the union is successful in persuading pilot groups at all three companies, ALPA would add about 20,800 members in the United States. @



JAY NALLIN/IMPACT VISUALS

The NLRB's decision opened the way for the ballots to be counted—and on Nov. 8, the count was 597–418 in favor of the union.

The NLRB ruling follows recent decisions in two states that public university employees can organize. In Pennsylvania, the state Labor Relations Board ruled in October that graduate students at Temple University are employees and have the right to form a union—which they've been trying to do for three years with AFT.

In Illinois, the state Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision that graduate students who teach classes and

AP PHOTO/ROBIN SCHOLZ



**Seeking respect: The Rev. Timothy Hallett takes in a rally to support graduate student employee efforts to organize at the University of Illinois**

grade papers at the University of Illinois are indeed employees as well. The Graduate Employees' Organization, affiliated with AFT, won an election in 1997, but university officials have refused to recognize the union. @

## CALIFORNIA FLUNKS COLLEGE MATH

**W**hen it comes to equal pay, California's community colleges are flunking an important math test. The state auditor recently found a 31 percent wage-rate disparity between full- and part-time faculty members. In other words, if part-time faculty were to teach a full course load at their current pay, they would receive an average of \$13,042 less in annual wages than full-time faculty members.

The auditor's report came just six months after the California Federation of Teachers added

up a similar equation. The AFT affiliate found that part-time community college faculty members earn just 37 percent of the salaries of their full-time counterparts. "Many [part-timers] have to apply for unemployment insurance in the summer to survive financially," says Patty Cox, CFT research director. "They are truly the working poor of California's educational system."

As part of their struggle for equal pay, California's part-time faculty are joining together in unions. In February, 1,250 instructors at the North Coast Community College District in Orange County joined CFT. A similar campaign is under way at the Citrus Community College District in Los Angeles. @

## Standing in Solidarity

**J**aslyn Williams, president of the Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) Council, Mary Foley, American Nurses Association president, AFT President Sandra Feldman and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney (left) joined forces in support of 1,500 striking D.C. Nurses Association members and were arrested in an act of civil disobedience. Bolstered by a fast by five nurses and D.C. labor council Street Heat activists, nurses reached a Nov. 6 settlement that included wage increases, involvement in staffing decisions and a mandatory overtime. @

# SAG, AFTRA Strike Rolling to Credits

After nearly six months of daily pickets, weekly rallies, a boycott of one of the nation's biggest advertisers and strong solidarity from unions across the country, the Screen Actors and Television and Radio Artists won a new contract that recognizes their right to fair pay.

The actors are voting on a new contract with the advertising industry that achieves two of the strikers' top goals: beating back corporate demands for pay cuts and gaining the right to be paid for performing in Internet ads.

The results of the vote will be announced in December. "Our members knew what was at stake in this negotiation and unflinchingly stood their ground. From our high-profile performers to rank and file, SAG and AFTRA members stood shoulder-to-shoulder, and their activities have produced success," says SAG President William Daniels.

In high-profile picketing led by such celebrities as Susan Sarandon, Martin Sheen and David Hyde Pierce, the actors took on big corporate advertisers and their demands for wage cuts and efforts to block actors from sharing in the

growing future of cable television and the Internet. The AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions joined the actors in a nationwide boycott of Procter & Gamble Co. products Tide, Ivory and Crest, with activists generating tens of thousands of e-mail messages to the company. P&G was leading the advertisers' fight against the actors' demands.

Under the agreement, the advertisers recognized SAG's and AFTRA's jurisdiction in commercials recorded for the Internet. They also agreed to preserve the unions' pay-per-play residuals for television commercials and to increase cable residuals payments by more than 100 percent by the third year of the contract. The companies had sought to pay actors one set fee for a television commercial rather than the current system of paying them each time the ad runs.

"It's been a long and difficult negotiation, and the solidarity of our combined memberships has been an inspiration," says AFTRA President Shelby Scott. "Critical issues, profoundly affecting the future working lives of actors and other performers, have been resolved." ☐



No pay, no play: Actor-comedian Rob Schneider, center wearing purple, joins hands with fellow actors protesting outside the headquarters of Procter & Gamble Oct. 10 in Cincinnati.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Milwaukee Workers Win Labor Peace

Milwaukee County took a precedent-setting step to ensure that social services and specialized transportation services for the elderly and disabled will not be delayed or disrupted by labor disputes. The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approved a "labor peace" ordinance Sept. 28 with the support of a coalition of union activists and community and religious groups.

The labor peace ordinance requires that businesses providing social services or specialized transportation services under county contracts worth \$250,000 or more sign agreements recognizing the right of workers to organize unions.

Under the agreements, employers are prohibited from using many of the tactics some companies commonly use to thwart organizing, such as giving workers false or misleading information about unions, holding captive-audience meetings or engaging in other tactics to intimidate workers seeking to form unions. Employers also must provide lists of workers and allow organizers level-playing-field access to worksites. In exchange, unions must promise not to strike or picket during organizing campaigns.

"A large coalition of unions, community groups and religious groups have taken the story of what happens when people try to organize to elected officials, who have taken notice and see that things have to change" says John Goldstein, president of the Milwaukee County Labor Council.

Sister Regina Williams, a member of the Racine Dominicans, along with nearly 20 others from her religious order, were among members of faith-based groups that supported the labor peace initiative by taking part in rallies and sending letters to each county supervisor.

At least two of those lawmakers didn't need much convincing. Joe Davis Sr., a member of Steamfitters Local 601, and Willie Johnson, from AFSCME Local 645, were elected as part of the AFL-CIO's 2000 in 2000 program and help bring the perspective of working families to the board. "When labor has representatives, it helps those who have been disenfranchised," says Davis. "We bring up the real issues that haven't been talked about before." ☐



A peaceful voice: Workers in Milwaukee rally Sept. 27 for passage of the "labor peace" ordinance.

## AFT Helps Schools Improve



After Chicago schools implemented AFT-backed education reforms last year, students' test scores were up an average of 10 percent. In Hartford, Conn., such reforms led to an improvement in achievement scores in 1999 that was more than in the previous four years combined. And in New York City, students in struggling schools receiving intensive support as part of a union-management initiative improved at twice the rate of comparable schools.

These are just a few of the success stories heralded in a new AFT report, *Doing What Works: Improving Big City School Districts*. Marshaling evidence from government and think-tank reports, AFT shows that students in eight urban districts have posted impressive educational gains in the past three to five years. Another 14 districts are showing promising signs of progress.

Districts that implement union-backed reforms—such

as improving professional development, reducing class size and ensuring safe and orderly schools—post gains in reading, writing and math achievement, according to the report.

New York City's P.S. 91 in the University Heights section of the Bronx began using some of the reforms in 1993. By this year, it had achieved enough success that the state removed it from a list of low-performing schools.

"Imagine the progress that could be made if every district focused its efforts and resources on doing what works for all children," says AFT President Sandra Feldman. "This is not only sound educational policy, it is what the public demands," she says, citing opinion polls showing that 76 percent of the public would rather improve public schools than provide vouchers for private schools.

The report is available at [www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/dwwfinal.pdf](http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/dwwfinal.pdf). ☐

## 'Capital Mobility' Aids Union-Busters

Today's global economy has made it easier for U.S. companies to move plants and investments out of the country—a threat employers increasingly use to intimidate workers seeking a voice at work, according to a new report by Cornell University labor experts.

In more than 400 National Labor Relations Board union elections in 1998 and 1999, more than half of employers threatened to close all or parts of their plants during union organizing campaigns, Cornell researchers report in *Uneasy Terrain: The Impact of Capital Mobility on Workers, Wages and Union Organizing*. And in more than three-quarters of those campaigns, employers also engaged in aggressive—often illegal—behavior, such as firing union supporters and monitoring union activity through electronic surveillance, to thwart organizing workers.

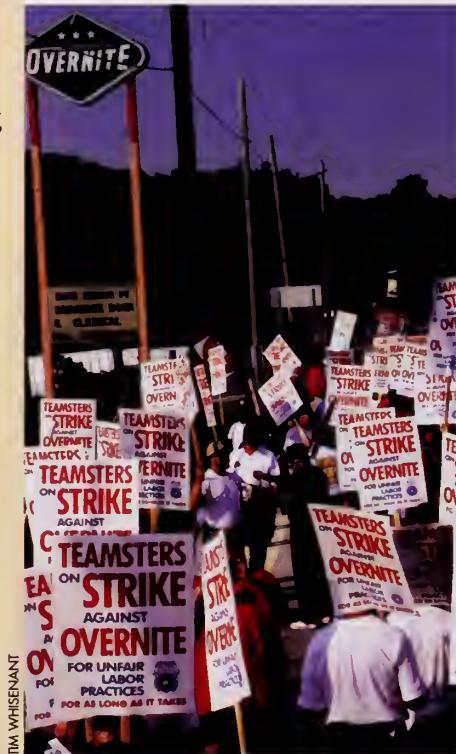
"Capital mobility" threats are effective, the report finds:

Workers won their unions in 38 percent of campaigns that brought closure threats, compared with 51 percent in campaigns without the threats.

"In effect, employers are using the global economy to intimidate workers from organizing by putting out the threat that they plan to move their operations overseas," says Kate Bronfenbrenner, who led the study and directs labor education research at Cornell.

The Cornell researchers recommend including enforceable labor standards in U.S. trade agreements and shaping tax laws to discourage companies from moving operations overseas, as well as tougher penalties for illegal union-busting behavior and strengthening labor laws to make it easier for workers to gain union recognition and first contracts.

To access the full 86-page report, go to [www.usdrc.gov/research/](http://www.usdrc.gov/research/) and download the file bronfenbrenner.pdf. ☐



TIM WHISENANT

## One-Year Fight at Overnite

Thousands of striking Teamsters members at Overnite Transportation Co., including these IB1 members in Atlanta, rallied at Overnite terminals around the country Oct. 24 to mark the one-year anniversary of their struggle for a voice at work and a fair contract with the trucking firm. The unfair labor practice strike against Overnite, a subsidiary of Union Pacific, began in Memphis, Tenn., on Oct. 24, 1999, and quickly spread to 140 terminals in 39 states. The union has filed more than 1,000 unfair labor practice charges against Overnite with the National Labor Relations Board for harassment, intimidation or unlawful discharge, and Overnite has paid tens of millions of dollars in legal fees and back wages for unlawful activities. To send an e-mail petition to Overnite clients to honor the strike, visit [www.thebird.org/petition/991121.html](http://www.thebird.org/petition/991121.html). ☐

# ART WORKS



Art from the heart: "Bus Boys," by Diana Cutrone, won first place in a Chicago art exhibit based on workers and their lives.

Visitors to the recent exhibit *Union Images 2000: A Celebration of the World of Work* got a chance to view the power of artwork that draws inspiration from the lives of ordinary workers and their struggle for respect and justice on the job.

The collection of 55 artworks made up a juried exhibition sponsored by the Chicago Federation of Labor and the city's Department of Cultural Affairs. In oil paintings, watercolors,

photographs, mixed media and computer-generated art, artists drew on the themes of union solidarity, equal opportunity, job safety, the rights of workers and the city's union movement.

"Bus Boys," an oil painting by Diana Cutrone depicting two Latino restaurant workers taking a break from the heat against a stark background, won first place.

Steven Carrelli, an instructor at DePaul University and third-place winner, says he painted his egg tempera work "Standard," a carpenter's plumb, to symbolize the high standards unions use to identify and change unfair practices.

The exhibit, which ran through Oct. 15, marks the third time the Chicago Federation of Labor has sponsored an art competition highlighting workers and their lives.

"I hope the viewers of our exhibit see the dignity of workers," says Don Turner, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor. "I hope they see their own face in these paintings and photographs." @

## Labor Ready

Building trades union members and community activists rally in Tacoma, Wash., outside the stockholders' meeting of Labor Ready, one of the nation's largest temp firms that dispatch blue-collar workers. The marchers sent a message to Labor Ready that temp workers deserve fair treatment and a voice at work. More than 100 building trades councils and local unions in 70 cities and 25 states have participated in the National Temp Campaign, launched in April, to bring a voice to temporary workers. @



MIKE BLAIN

## OUT FRONT

It's a few days after the election and I don't yet know who the next president will be. I hope that by the time you read *America@work*, the historic uncertainty about this election will be resolved and working families will have won a strong ally in the White House—Al Gore.

But there was one clear winner on Nov. 7: a Working Families Agenda. Americans spoke up so loudly about the issues central to our lives that the next president and all other elected leaders must listen.

On issue after issue, Republican as well as Democratic candidates campaigned—and won votes—with pledges to deliver for working families. Even George W. Bush was forced to join Al Gore in campaigning on working family issues. Although their approaches and their intentions were radically different, here is what they both promised voters—and what voters should be entitled to expect from their new leaders:

- A Social Security program that "will keep its promises to our seniors," as Bush said Oct. 12 in Langhorne, Pa. Gore vowed to use federal surplus funds to strengthen Social Security rather than provide tax cuts for the wealthy.
- A Patients' Bill of Rights that gives patients and their doctors—rather than HMO bureaucrats—the right to make medical decisions. Gore is a strong supporter of such legislation. Although Bush attempted to kill a similar measure in Texas, during the campaign when polls showed working family support for such laws, Bush did an about-face and claimed credit for it.
- Prescription drug coverage that is available and affordable for every senior.
- Affordable health insurance coverage for every working family and every child.

• Quality education for our kids. In the first presidential debate, Bush said he wants to make sure the education system fulfills its "hope and promise." Gore declared education his No. 1 priority and called for modernizing schools, reducing class sizes and recruiting new teachers.

• Fair treatment for immigrants. In a June 26 speech, Bush said, "New Americans are to be welcomed." Gore declared his commitment to "overall fair and even-handed treatment" of immigrants.

Whatever questions remain about the election, it is clear that working families are a force to be reckoned with. The election confirmed that reaching out to our members with information about candidates' positions on the issues propels them to the ballot box—so effectively that, nationwide, union household members made up 26 percent of all voters. We know our members cast their votes based on issues (62 percent) rather than political party (12 percent) or character (23 percent). And we know that People Power is the only way to match the dollar power that enables business to outspend unions on politics by 15-to-1. Where we go from here is up to us. @

## Working Families Votes Count



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

# Working Families

## Get Out the Vote

"I make \$6.50 an hour at Labor Ready. That's not even enough to pay rent or buy food."

Jim, Seattle Labor Ready

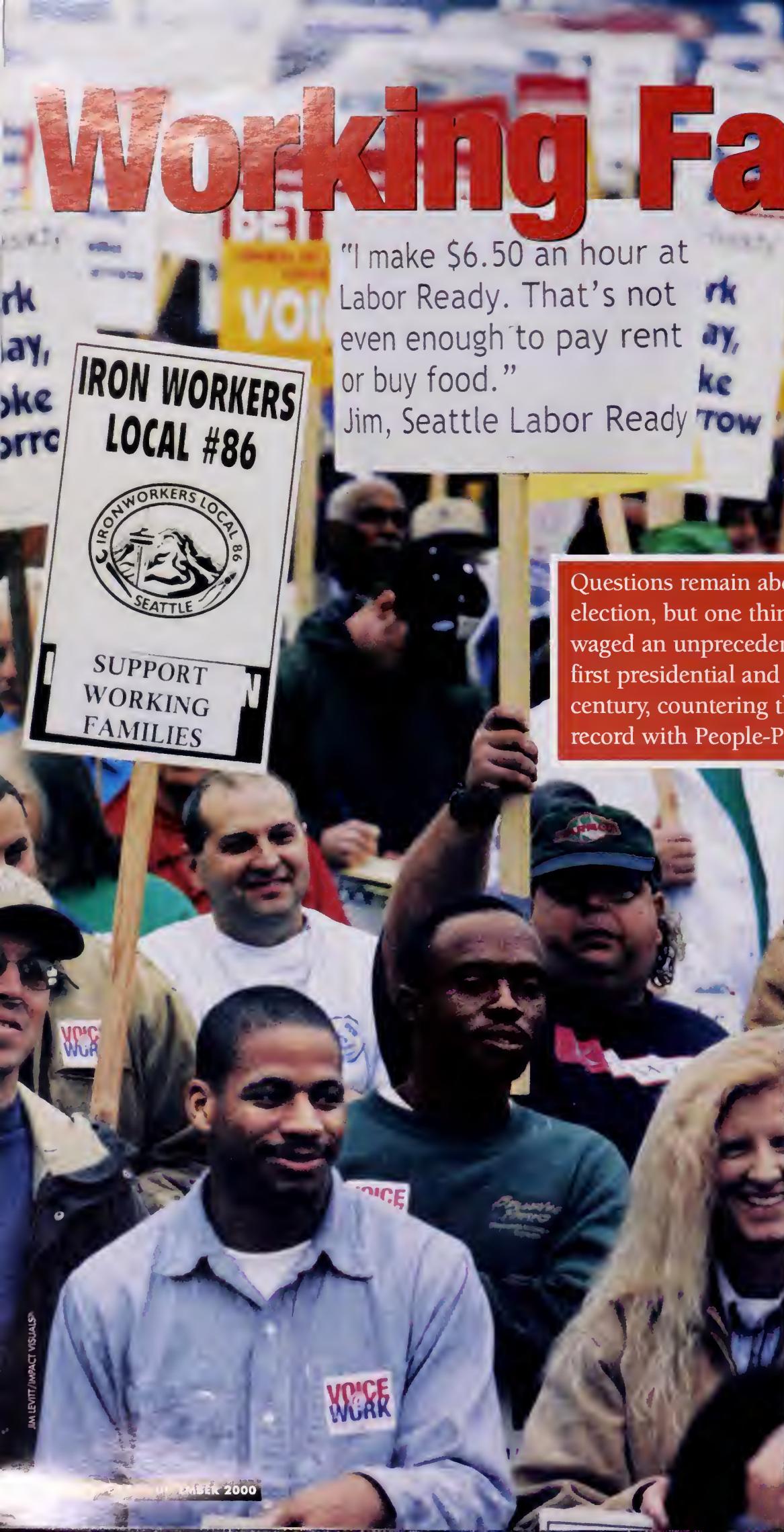
By Mike Hall

Questions remain about the outcome of the presidential election, but one thing is certain: Working families waged an unprecedented get-out-the-vote effort in the first presidential and congressional elections of the 21st century, countering the largest corporate spending on record with People-Powered Politics.

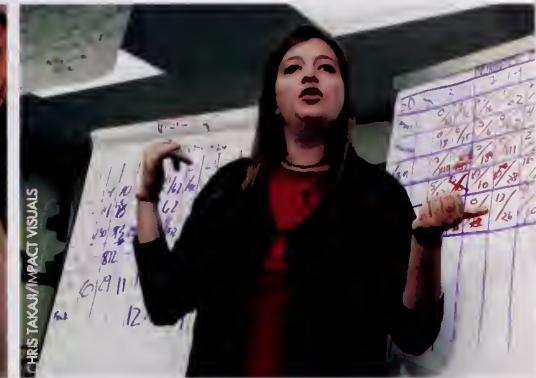
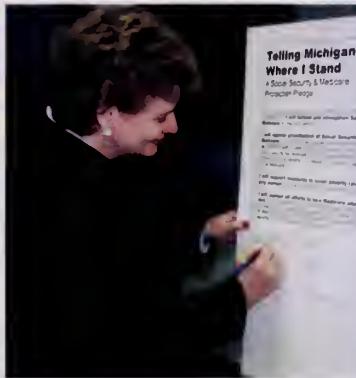
While Big Business reached deeper than ever into its political war chests—spending more than \$841 million by Oct. 1, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics—Labor 2000 activists volunteered millions of hours mobilizing union voters to cast crucial ballots on working families' issues and candidates. The months-long nationwide effort resulted in resounding defeats of anti-worker ballot initiatives in California, Michigan and Oregon, and the election of such working families' candidates as California's Adam Schiff to the U.S. House of Representatives and New York's Hillary Rodham Clinton to the U.S. Senate.



Powered up: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka traveled on the People-Powered bus, stopping in West Virginia for a rally to strengthen Social Security and Medicare.



"We had everybody involved, from Steelworkers to Service Employees to Teamsters—everybody," says Scranton, Pa., Labor 2000 coordinator Mary Jule Kapacs, a member of Steelworkers Local 5652, who first



volunteered for political action in 1998.

"This year we quadrupled our efforts. When you build solidarity, you build friendships, and more and more people are willing to work to make a difference," Kapacs says.

"It's obvious to anyone involved in the political process that we had the biggest get-out-the-vote effort in history," says AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, who chairs the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education. "Every union in the AFL-CIO was on the ground mobilizing their members. It's that kind of solidarity that the American union moment is all about."

### People Power vs. big bucks

Union household voters turned out in force to make a difference for working families across the country. In Michigan, union household members cast a whopping 43 percent of the vote statewide, voting 61 percent to 35 percent for Gore. In Wisconsin, Missouri and Pennsylvania, union households made up 30 percent to 32 percent of voters and backed Gore by similar margins. Nationwide, union households made up 26 percent of the vote, up from 19 percent in 1992. Labor 2000 activists fueled working families' momentum at the ballot box, waging a grassroots campaign in which thousands of volunteers:

- Registered 2.3 million new union household voters—up from half a million in 1998.
- Made 8 million phone calls to union households.
- Distributed 14 million leaflets at union job sites.

At the same time, the AFL-CIO alone mailed more than 12 million pieces of literature to union homes and trained more than

1,000 Labor 2000 coordinators for worksites, local unions, central labor councils and state federations. In the final days of the campaign, more than 100,000 union GOTV volunteers fanned out from Miami to Seattle,

In Colorado, union volunteers registered 80 percent of union members to vote in 10 key districts as part of the state federation's Labor 2000 mobilization to win a senate majority and prevent an all-but-certain pas-

from San Diego to Boston and from Austin to Detroit.

### From registration to the ballot box

Registering 2.3 million union members to vote involved more than a yearlong effort by local unions, central labor councils and state federations, which set out to increase by 10 percent the number of registered union members nationwide.

sage of right to work legislation if Big Business lawmakers took control of the state legislature. In New Jersey, the state federation's WORKER/VOTER program, which began in 1999, signed up more than 25,000 new union member voters through local union drives and special WORKER/VOTER registration days. In Detroit, a coordinated effort, including the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the A. Philip Randolph Institute and the NAACP, registered 50,000

## Making Mile-High Magic in Colorado

More than a year ago, the Colorado AFL-CIO and Denver Area Labor Federation set in motion their plans to put pro-working family candidates in control of the state senate and ensure that right to work legislation—proposed annually by anti-worker lawmakers—would not become law. With pro-right to work forces in control of the House and governorship and with several worker-friendly Senate lawmakers, including some Republicans, forced from office because of term-limit laws, the battle was crucial.

Here's how they built their successful campaign and won a pro-working family Senate majority:

- Identified 10 districts based on union membership and voting patterns.
- Recruited 50 local union members and officers as district coordinators, who in turn reached out for volunteers—and by spring, more than 900 volunteers had signed on.
- Set and met an 80 percent union member voter registration goal in each district.
- Set and met an 80 percent union member turnout goal for each district.
- Recruited more than 3,000 Election Day GOTV volunteers from local unions and community allies.

"We won these races because of the unwavering dedication to the Labor 2000 program, because of the extraordinary work of the Labor 2000 volunteers and because of the huge commitment of the local unions," says Ellen Golombek, secretary-treasurer of the Colorado AFL-CIO. "Everybody pulled together and made it happen."

Look for a more detailed examination of the strategy-building efforts of Colorado union activists in an upcoming issue of *America@work*. ☐



CHRIS TAKAJI/IMPACT VISUALS



new voters. In Oregon, unions' statewide voter registration efforts added 18,000 new union names to the rolls.

Florida AFL-CIO President Marilyn Lenard says local unions there registered 10,000 union member voters this year, on top of the 70,000 new voters the state federation signed up through intensified registration efforts begun in 1997. "That doesn't even count the family members or new voters who signed up through drives by community and other activists groups," Lenard says.

In Cleveland, unions joined forces with the NAACP, and their Register to Win drive concentrated on worksites and working-class neighborhoods to add 16,499 new voters to rolls, says John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland central labor council.

#### Focus on the issues

One of Labor 2000's key components was to ensure working family voters knew where candidates stood on working family issues—and the best way to do that, as demonstrated in the Labor '96 and Labor '98 campaigns, is one-on-one, member-to-member contact.

"If you're a union member, talking to a union member, you have more credibility, because we are all for working people, and we definitely want to elect candidates who are for working people," says Pat Rua, a steward with Steelworkers Local 134L in Milford, Conn., and graduate of USWA's political action training program.

Among the 14 million worksite fliers Labor 2000 activists distributed were several hundred handed out by the Milwaukee County Labor Council at Tower Automotive Corp. in one September action—and more than 1 million fliers distributed in one day at 10,000 worksites by volunteers from the New York AFL-CIO unions. For the presidential and House and Senate races, Labor

2000 developed 755 different worksite fliers for races around the country, describing each candidate's position on such union and working family issues as paycheck deception, prevailing wage laws, Social Security and a strong Patients' Bill of Rights.

One of the most effective and popular methods of getting the word out about George W. Bush's record as governor of Texas came from workers who made up the AFL-CIO Texas Truth Squad. From June to late October, Texas Truth Squad members traveled around the country, taking part in more than three dozen union rallies, town hall meetings and other events to describe how working families got the shaft under Bush's Texas tenure.

"People should know that George W. Bush is easily swayed by corporate money. When you take into account his attempts to privatize social services and the prisons, nobody benefits but the corporations," Truth Squad member Sheri Cagle told union audiences. Cagle, an AFSCME Local 3848 member and 12-year veteran Texas correctional officer, left her job out of frustration

#### Ballot Initiatives Around the Nation

As the result of Labor 2000's massive voter education campaigns, working families successfully defeated four state ballot initiatives that would have changed the future of public schools and jeopardized children's education as well as silenced working families' voices in the political arena.

In Michigan, voters defeated by 69 percent to 31 percent Ballot Proposal 1, which would have eliminated that state's constitutional ban on state aid to private and religious schools and provided taxpayer-funded vouchers for private school tuition.

In California, working families resoundingly defeated California's Proposition 38—the "Draper Initiative," named after Silicon Valley billionaire Tim Draper, who spent more than \$2 million to get the issue on the ballot. The measure would have provided vouchers to some private and parochial school students and could have cost the state as much as \$3 billion in the first two years.

"The defeat of both Michigan and California's voucher initiatives, by 2-to-1 margins, must serve as a mandate for improving our public schools and not for false solutions such as vouchers," says AFT President Sandra Feldman.

Working families faced a tough but ultimately victorious fight in Oregon, where two measures—Constitutional Amendments 92 and 98, patterned after California's 1998 Proposition 226—would have taken away union members' right to participate in politics through payroll deduction. Measure 92 sought to ban payroll deduction for any type of political activity without annual written permission from workers and their employers. Measure 98, which targeted public employees, would have banned employees from taking part in all political activities—even writing a letter to their lawmakers. Both measures were sponsored by Bill Sizemore, whose backing by Grover Norquist and other wealthy, out-of-state, far-right-wingers also helped fund a similar ballot initiative that Oregon working families defeated in 1998.

"We started out down 2-to-1 in the polls three months ago, primarily because these measures were disguised as workers' rights and campaign finance reform measures," says Oregon AFL-CIO President Tim Nesbitt. "But we built a strong labor-community coalition, launched a broad campaign to expose these measures as attacks on working people and organized union voters to turn out in force to defeat these measures. It worked. We defeated both measures by convincing margins. But most importantly, we built a strong political program within our state federation. We are stronger now than ever before." @



MICHAEL HALE



with Bush-backed health insurance increases and prison privatization.

Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department held Working Women Vote Week, Sept. 18-22, to focus on working women's issues and the power of women's votes. Seeking to reach more than 3 million women in actions at more than 10,000 workplaces nationwide, Working Women Vote 2000 brought candidates and working women together in dozens of "Working Women Vote" forums to discuss the importance of such issues as equal pay, health care, education, Social Security and balancing work and family life.

### It's a 'Go' on GOTV

As corporations lavished big bucks on anti-worker issues and candidates—outspending unions by 15-to-1, a 40 percent increase from 1998—today's unions headed into the final election stretch with the union movement's most extensive-ever get-out-the-vote mobilization drive.

More than 100,000 volunteers staffed GOTV phone banks, braved bad weather for daily precinct walks and leafleted worksites round the clock. Union leaders—including AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson—joined working families at 100 events in 25 cities as part of "People-Powered" bus tours around the country, drawing huge crowds of union members in Appalachia, the Pacific Northwest, the Midwest and Pennsylvania.

AFL-CIO unions took part in three national leafleting days, Oct. 31 and Nov. 2 and 6, to energize union members to get out and vote. In Louisville, Ky., members of APRI and CBTU partnered with local congregations and civil rights groups in a massive get-out-the-vote drive. Thousands of New York City building and construction trades workers—"Hard Hats for Hillary"—joined a huge GOTV rally in Manhattan, one part of the New York City Central Labor Council's GOTV drive that brought out more than 10,000 volunteers. United Farm Workers activists formed a "human billboard" line in Glendale, Calif., to get out the vote among Latinos.

"This is the first vote of the new millennium, and it's important for union members

### Union Members Get Elected

Nine-year elementary school teacher Julie Sabo, a Minnesota Federation of Teachers Local 59 member, is now among the newest elected leaders to the Minnesota State Senate—and one of 901 union members to run for public office this election year as part of the AFL-CIO's **2000 in 2000** campaign.

Launched by the AFL-CIO in 1997, **2000 in 2000** identified office holders and office seekers who are union members and sought to increase the number of elected union members in public offices—from governor to Congress to state legislatures and local offices.

Sabo, who campaigned on a platform of improving education for children through a broad plan that addresses such community issues as affordable housing, transportation and livable-wage jobs, says her victory "demonstrates that these are the issues that are important to Minnesota working families and their communities."

"These are not issues we solve. These are issues we work on continually," Sabo says. "It's what government does best." ☐

COURTESY SABO CAMPAIGN



Sabo

to make an educated vote," says Jesse Harris, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 227 in Louisville. "There are some big issues for working people, especially African Americans, such as Social Security, health care and prescription drugs."

Local unions around the country shut down regular operations to mobilize staff and get members to the ballot box. In Los Angeles, Communications Workers of America Local 9586, Electrical Workers Local 18, UFCW Local 770, the SEIU Western Regional office and SEIU locals 99, 347, 399, 434B and 660 were among the locals that closed for business and joined in the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor's GOTV drive.

In Kenosha, Wis., the labor council made more than 7,800 union home visits in the week before the election, and more than 1,000 Kenosha union members and retirees joined a GOTV rally at UAW Local 72 Nov. 2 to hear

Sen. Joe Lieberman. Retired union members were a big part of Labor 2000 volunteer effort across the country. Ralph Rigdon, a retired member of Beaverton, Ore., UAW Local 492 who served 30 years as a union leader, volunteered four or five hours each day for weeks prior to Nov. 7, calling UAW members across the state to get out the vote.

"You know what Walter Reuther said," says Rigdon, who fondly remembers the day he shook hands with the former UAW president. "You can lose what you got in the lunch pail at the ballot box."

"There is a true human element to this election," says New York City CLC President Brian McLaughlin. "Thousands of union volunteers pulling hundreds of thousands of union members to the polls."

### Looking ahead

The huge mobilization and massive turnout by working families is one of the major stories of the 2000 election. The narrow margins in the presidential and congressional elections show that every vote—and every union vote—ultimately can make a difference for working families.

"It's clear that union members exercised the unmatched power we hold as a united political force in this nation," says President Sweeney. "We've reunited our ranks and resparked the soul of our movement. We're building a solidarity and culture of mobilization that will last, and we're going to build it even more. It will serve working families well for many years, and on many fronts." ☐

**Fired up: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joined union members at GOTV events across the country.**



LEN KAMINSKY

# A Working Families Holiday Shopping Guide

## G U I D E

Buying working family-friendly gifts for the holidays has never been easier, now that many union-oriented products are just a click away on the Internet. Most sites offer online ordering, although some require users to mail or phone orders. For those without access to the Internet, many union-friendly sites also offer toll-free numbers, making gifts only a phone call away.

### getting started

## workingfamilies.com

The AFL-CIO's Internet portal, [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com), is making it fun and easy to save money while shopping worker friendly this holiday season.

Log in often to check out discounts on "deals of the day." You can also sign up to get e-mails alerting you to hot deals by registering with [workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) and send holiday greeting cards to friends and family.

Check out the online outlet store exclusively for union members, which offers an ever-changing selection of "extreme deals." The workers who send out gifts from the distribution center have a voice on the job with UNITE Local 978. You won't find any products made in sweatshop conditions or by anti-union employers on the site. It's a great way to shop for value while staying true to your values.

The marketplace at [workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) is also union members' only worker-friendly department store on the Web, with links to unionized and other worker-friendly retail outlets. The Company Store, [www.thecompanystore.com](http://www.thecompanystore.com) (800-285-DOWN), offers whimsically patterned bed linens, towels and home accessories—and

workers there have a voice on the job with UNITE Local 379.

You can custom-order home address plaques, paperweights, sundials and baskets—made by members of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics Local 257B—at [www.colonialbrass.com](http://www.colonialbrass.com) (800-549-8670). The portals' Worker-Friendly Marketplace includes a link to everyone's holiday favorite, See's Candies, [www.sees.com](http://www.sees.com) (800-915-7337), where workers are members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers. There you can buy delicious chocolate candies and fun stuff for the kids, including a See's delivery truck.

—Laureen Lazarovici



### Bread and Roses

The song striking textile workers sang in the early 1900s—"Hearts starve as well as bodies, give us bread but give us roses"—inspired the Bread and Roses Cultural Project of Health & Human Service Employees Union 1199/SEIU. The project runs music, art and poetry programs for union members in New York City, and its website, [www.bread-and-roses.com/shopping\\_index.html](http://www.bread-and-roses.com/shopping_index.html) (800-666-1728), offers posters that include the work of New York City high school students who participated in Bread and Roses student exhibitions.

The site also features posters and books from the "Women of Hope" series, with striking photos of social-justice heroines from around the world. Also available: a 2001 calendar with the art of Ralph Fasanella, whose colorful work depicts the joys and trials of working people.

### Labor Heritage Foundation

The Labor Heritage Foundation ([www.laborheritage.org/catalog.html](http://www.laborheritage.org/catalog.html)), which encourages singing, dancing and general merriment in union-building campaigns, offers a well-chosen selection of union-oriented videos and music. Recordings include "Si Se Puede," a 1976 recording of United Farm Worker classics with arrangements and instrumentation by Los Lobos, in Spanish with printed translation. There's also "Where Have All the Flowers Gone: The Songs of Pete Seeger," with 39 tunes performed by Bruce Springsteen, Ani DiFranco, Bonnie Raitt and others.

Videos range from historical dramas, including *Matewan*, John Sayles' film about the struggles of coal miners in post-World War I West Virginia, to the comic, such as *9 to 5*, starring Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton, who kidnap their sexist boss and take over the department. There also are books, buttons and posters.

Holiday songs rewritten with a union twist are available on the website. To have them faxed to you, call 202-842-7879.



### Northland Poster Collective

The Northland Poster Collective, [www.northlandposter.com](http://www.northlandposter.com), (800-627-3082) bills itself as "the mall of the other America, where the power of art meets the pas-



sion for justice." This website features posters, note cards, postcards, bumper stickers, buttons and T-shirts with messages of justice. And who can resist a baby bib emblazoned with the logo of the International Babyhood of Eaters, Soilers & Snugglers? \$6.00.

## Syracuse Cultural Workers

The Syracuse Cultural Workers, [www.syriculturalworkers.org](http://www.syriculturalworkers.org), (315-474-1132; toll-free fax: 877-265-5399) publishes books and posters promoting social justice. Check out the "alternative alphabet poster," which imbues the familiar, "A is for Apple" teaching technique with activist energy, such as "J for Mother Jones," "M for March" and "V for Vote." Members of Graphic Communications Local 284 print the poster; the art also is available on postcards. Poster is \$16.

## Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees

There's at least one person on everyone's holiday list who could use a quiet weekend away or a trip to an exciting locale. If you travel this season or give someone a vacation, make sure a union hotel is part of the itinerary. The Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees makes them easy to find with its online guide, arranged by city and state, at [www.hereunion.org/hotelguide/](http://www.hereunion.org/hotelguide/). Call 202-393-4373 for a print copy of the guide.

## Politicalgifts.com

"Building to win, building to last" means carrying out political action even after the elections are over. Check out [www.politicalgifts.com](http://www.politicalgifts.com) (877-844-2517) for T-shirts, buttons, ties and "Politcards," playing cards featuring caricatures of elected officials (\$14).

## Jobs with Justice

Couldn't make it to Prague to protest the recent World Bank and International Monetary Fund meeting? You still can send a message with a "Stop Corporate Greed" T-shirt from Jobs with Justice (\$15 at [www.jwj.org/OrgTools/JWMats.htm](http://www.jwj.org/OrgTools/JWMats.htm); 202-434-1106). This website also offers Jobs with Justice baseball caps, buttons and bumper stickers.



## Harley-Davidson

Yes, you can order a motorcycle, built by PACE International Union and Machinists members, online. If you don't think Santa will be able to get that down the chimney, check out the Harley-logo goodies like a kid's dinnerware set, leather riding gear and belt buckles at <http://roadstore.harley-davidson.com>.



## Etch-a-Sketch

The young artist or architect will enjoy Etch-a-Sketch, [www.world-of-toys.com](http://www.world-of-toys.com) (800-641-6226). It's made by members of Steelworkers Local 15522. In addition to the classic model, you also can choose travel and pocket-size models and get the toy personalized for the kids on your gift list.



## OshKosh B'Gosh

OshKosh B'Gosh's trademark overalls are available at the company's website, [www.oshkoshbgosh.com](http://www.oshkoshbgosh.com), where workers have a voice on the job with UNITE Local 1567. Also check out the cute baby rompers and really cool clear and black messenger bag. 800-692-4674.



## Radio Flyer

Riding around in Radio Flyer wagons, made by members of UAW 1066, has helped children's imaginations soar. They are available online at [www.redwagons.com](http://www.redwagons.com) (877-739-2466).



## Holiday Bookstore

The workers at Powell's Books ([www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)), the mammoth independent bookseller in Portland, Ore., are new members of Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 5. If you are unable to travel to Portland to visit the enormous store, you can order many of these working family-friendly novels online, children's books and nonfiction works recommended by the George Meany Center for Labor Studies.

### Fiction

*Dreamland*, by Kevin Baker, involves a gangster who falls in love with a seamstress and union agitator on the Lower East Side in the era of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. \$6.99. HarperCollins.

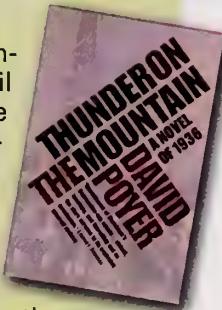
*Payback*, by Thomas Kelly, is a thriller set amid the construction boom in New York City in the 1980s. \$6.99. Fawcett Crest.

*Thunder on the Mountain*, by David Poyer, centers around an accident at a Pennsylvania oil company in 1936 that ultimately involves the workers, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Pinkertons and Eleanor Roosevelt. \$6.99. St. Martins.

*Death & Blintzes*, by Dorothy Rosen and Sidney Rosen, showcases Belle Appleman, a garment worker and union member who helps the Boston police track down the murderer of a fellow worker in 1936. \$10.95. Academy Chicago Publishers.

*The Unquiet Earth*, by Denise Giardina, is a tale of love, union organizing and politics that takes place in an Appalachian mining town during the Depression. \$6.99. Ivy Books.

*God's Bits of Wood*, by Sembene Ousmane, translated by Francis Price, takes place during a 1947 railroad workers' strike in French-controlled Niger. \$6.95. Heinemann.



# Holiday Bookstore

## Young Adults

*The Ultimate Field Guide to the U.S. Economy: A Compact and Irreverent Guide to Economic Life in America* is one of several books available on the United for a Fair Economy website, [www.ufenet.org/order/index.html](http://www.ufenet.org/order/index.html). It's also available on the publisher's site, [www.wwnorton.com/orders/np/084578.htm](http://www.wwnorton.com/orders/np/084578.htm). The *Field Guide* is an easy-to-use, sometimes whimsical look at the serious topic of income inequality and the global economy.

*Black Workers: A Documentary History From Colonial Times to the Present*, edited by Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis, is a rich collection of letters, journal excerpts and other primary sources that shed light on the work and lives of African Americans. \$16.95. Temple University Press.

*Downsize This!*, by Michael Moore, takes the reader on a wild ride with the author through his encounters with corporate greed. \$13. HarperPerennial.



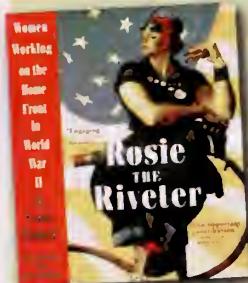
*De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century*, by Elizabeth Martinez, offers a collection of essays on women's organizing and struggles for economic justice. \$18. South End Press.

*Confessions of a Union-Buster*, by Martin Jay Levitt, involves the reader in a rare peek into the tactics of corporations as they try to silence workers' voice on the job. \$25. Crown Publishers.

## Young Union Readers

*Kids on Strike!*, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, tells the stories of children who organized to improve their own working conditions in the early 1900s. All ages. \$20. Houghton Mifflin.

*Growing Up in Coal Country*, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, takes a look at life in the Pennsylvania coal mines through personal interviews, newspaper accounts, mining inspection records and other original sources. All ages. \$7.95. Houghton Mifflin.



*Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II*, by Penny Colman, explores the lives of the millions of women who were recruited to work at nontraditional jobs in defense plants, factories and offices. All ages. \$8.95. Crown Publishers.

*Dolores Huerta*, by Frank Huerta Perez, profiles the co-founder of the United Farm Workers as part of the Contemporary Hispanic Americans series. Ages 9-12. \$4. Raintree Steck-Vaughn.

*A. Philip Randolph: Labor Leader*, by Sally Hanley, looks at the life of the legendary African American leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Ages 9-12. \$9.95. Chelsea House Publishers.

*Lyddie*, by Katherine Patterson, a coming-of-age story, explores the life of a farm girl from Vermont who works at a Lowell textile factory in the 1840s. Young adults. \$5.99. Puffin.

*Help Wanted: Short Stories About Young People Working*, edited by Anita Silvey, takes a look at teens, the jobs they have—and the lessons they learn, whether working in fast-

food restaurants or engaging in community service. Young adults. \$16.95. Little, Brown.

*Big Annie of Calumet: A True Story of the Industrial Revolution*, by Jerry Stanley, profiles Annie Clemenc, who led protesters and inspired workers when miners struck against the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company in 1913 in Michigan. Young adults. \$19. Crown Publishers.



*Riot*, by Mary Casanova, follows the life of Bryan, a sixth-grader who is caught in a web of conflicting family loyalties when his father goes on strike. Ages 9-12. \$4.95. Hyperion Paperbacks.

*Clack Clack Moo: Cows That Type*, by Doreen Cronin, features bovine justice-seekers who type up their demands for extra blankets to ward off the cold night air. When Farmer Brown refuses, the cows go on strike. Simon and Schuster. \$15.

*Pat the Bunny*, the tale of a lovable fuzzy rabbit, is published by Golden Books, a company where workers have a voice on the job with UAW Local 1007. \$6.99. Ages newborn-3. Golden Books ([www.goldenbooks.com](http://www.goldenbooks.com)) also offers dozens of other titles children will enjoy.

## Magazines Make Great Gifts

Magazines are gifts that keep on giving throughout the year.

*WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society*, [www.mesharpe.com/usa\\_main.htm](http://www.mesharpe.com/usa_main.htm) (800-541-6563). Quarterly. \$35.

*Dollars and Sense*, a bimonthly magazine of economic issues and opinions from a worker-oriented point of view, [www.dollarsandsense.org/subscrib.html](http://www.dollarsandsense.org/subscrib.html) (800-783-4903). One-year introductory subscription: \$18.95.

*Labor's Heritage*, a richly illustrated quarterly magazine that celebrates the history of workers' struggles for respect and dignity on the job, [www.georgemeany.org/magazine.html](http://www.georgemeany.org/magazine.html) (301-431-5457). One-year subscription: \$19.95.

*Mother Jones*, [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com) (800-438-6656). Six issues a year. One-year introductory subscription: \$10.

*The Nation*, [www.TheNation.com](http://www.TheNation.com) (800-333-8536). Forty-seven issues a year. One-year subscription: \$36.

*In These Times*, [www.inthesetimes.com](http://www.inthesetimes.com) (800-827-0270). Biweekly. One-year subscription: \$19.95.

*The American Prospect*, [www.prospect.org/subscribe/index.html](http://www.prospect.org/subscribe/index.html) (888-687-8732). Biweekly. One-year subscription: \$29.95.

*America@work*, [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) (800-442-5645; in Washington, D.C., 202-637-5044). Eleven issues a year. One-year subscription: \$10. @

## Other Online Shopping Resources

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice publishes an online brochure, "Conscious Giving: Steps to Sweat-Free Holiday Shopping," at [www.nicwj.org/pages/ConsciousGiving.html](http://www.nicwj.org/pages/ConsciousGiving.html). Order by phone at 773-728-8400.

Check out the safety of toys you are considering giving at two websites from the Consumer Product Safety Commission. A range of advice is available at [www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/toy\\_sfjy.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/toy_sfjy.html). A list of toys recalled because of safety hazards is at [www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/toy.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/toy.html).

Become a more informed shopper during the holidays and year-round by checking out [www.aflcio.org/articles/consumer/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/articles/consumer/index.htm) for a listing of online consumer resources. @

# Organizing the Worker

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

## Next Door

LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

**I**t's a hot day in late August and about 40 workers who clean the floors, serve the food and tend to the patients at the University of California at Los Angeles are meeting in a campus classroom cooled only by two rattling ceiling fans. But what's really getting these members of AFSCME Local 3299 steamed is the fact they haven't gotten a fair raise in years. UCLA workers such as these custodians received tiny increases in the past five years—pay raises that were eaten up when the university increased their parking fees. Until last year, patient care workers hadn't gotten a raise since 1995. Not even years of loyal service are rewarded. When AFSCME organizer Bob Battle asks the group what they get after 10 years of working on campus, two women sitting in the back of the classroom shout, "Un brochacito"—a little pin—and they hold their thumbs and forefingers millimeters apart.



### Building Strength with Internal Organizing



EDDIE WHITEFIELD

**Talking union:** Members of Boilermakers Local S-14 in Tennessee (left) and AFSCME members at the University of California are building strength by organizing at the workplace.

The workers of AFSCME Local 3299's Member Action Team came together to build support for a march Sept. 12, the date the union began bargaining over wages with the University of California. The bargaining unit at the 10-campus UC system is an "agency shop," meaning the union negotiates a contract and represents all workers, but workers are not required to join the union. Instead, they may pay a fee to cover the expenses of bargaining and representation. In an open shop, workers are not obligated by their union contract to become members of the union. Without the members' active involvement beyond paying their fair share, however, leaders know this arrangement can mean having a union that's not strong enough to win the benefits and respect workers deserve.

That's why AFSCME members are taking the opportunity of upcoming contract talks to strengthen their union. They are rallying, circulating petitions, talking one-on-one—

shops, where workers aren't contractually obligated to become members. Federal employees and many other government workers in cities, counties and states, for instance, are not required to pay union dues at their workplaces—although they receive the same union-negotiated pay, benefits and health and safety protections as members. Many workers in open shops think they are getting something for nothing and don't contribute their money or commitment to the unions that represent them. In addition, 21 so-called right to work states (mostly in the South and West) have laws preventing union contracts from requiring all workers at an organized workplace to join the union. In these "right to work for less" states, wages are 19 percent lower than in the rest of the country, where a higher percentage of workers have the benefits of union membership.

Internal organizing helps sign up members, strengthening the union's voice in the

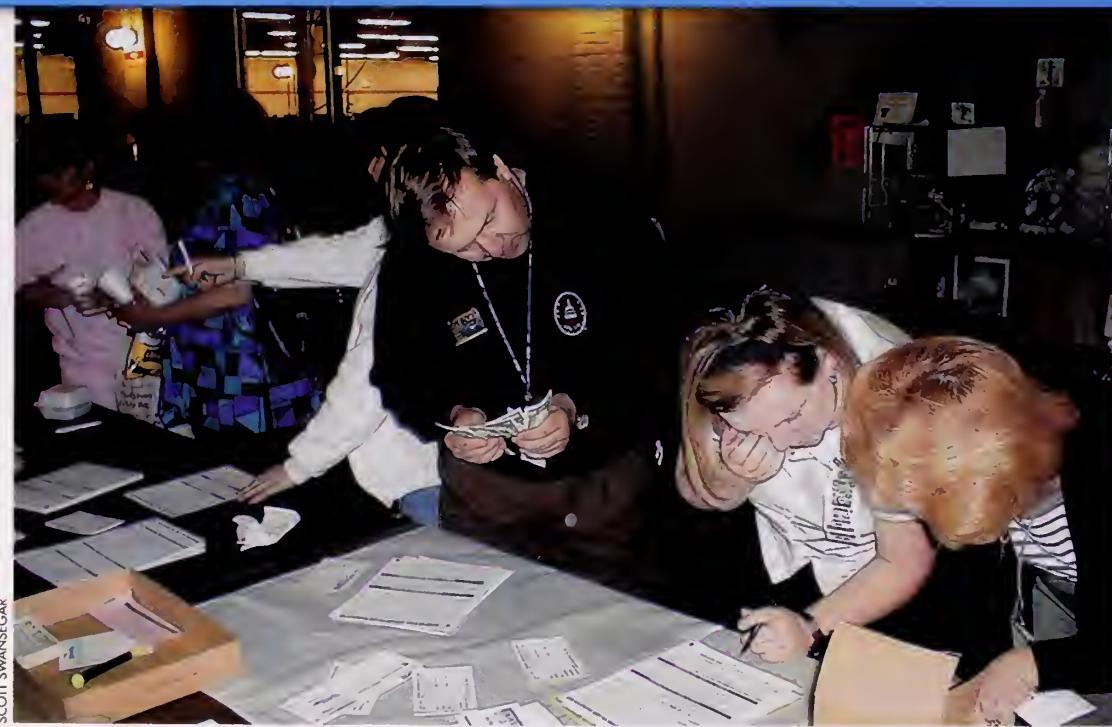
ously move to the next level of union participation," says Sandra Feldman, president of AFT, which has long had an internal organizing process in place. "The AFT attempts to build activism in a variety of ways.

Through our internal organizing efforts, our members can suggest ways that the services they provide to students, patients and citizens can be improved."

### **Workplace issues: a springboard for organizing**

Discussing the need for one-on-one communication about key issues was an important part of AFSCME Local 3299's August meeting. Activists and workplace leaders such as 21-year-old Marco Manjarrez train potential worksite leaders in mobilizing colleagues for events like the Sept. 12 march. Manjarrez is a host and greeter at one of the UCLA dormitory dining halls. Although he has a career position, many of his colleagues are "casuals," workers in part-time,

## **Internal organizing helps sign up members,**



**A bite of justice: AFGE's "lunch-and-learn" effort drew 1,200 new members during a spring organizing drive.**

and signing up hundreds of unorganized workers with whom they work side-by-side at the state's prestigious institutions of higher education.

AFSCME's campaign to strengthen Local 3299 is an example of internal organizing—a phrase that can refer to building strength in agency shops, such as UC's, and in open

workplace. Workers who get involved in internal organizing often do it for the same reasons as workers who form unions: to have a stronger voice in their workplaces, lives and communities. The key to success, as in any organizing effort, is one-to-one contact—one worker talking with another.

"Our hope is that members will continu-

ostensibly temporary jobs who receive poor benefits, no vacation time and no pension. Throughout the UC system, casuals can work for years and even decades—fired and rehired in quick succession—under these abusive conditions. During a role-playing exercise, Manjarrez feigns skepticism about getting involved in an organizing campaign: "Why should I go to the march? What will I get out of it?" When a colleague says he'll be able to get more hours so he'll have more money to take out his girlfriend, the group bursts out in laughter. In turn, the others practice and pledge to bring at least five workers from their department to the rally.

Local 3299's internal organizing strategy is to map the workplace, identify and recruit leaders and form committees to tackle workplace problems—such as those at UCLA, where laundry workers and medical records employees were partially successful in their fight to stop plans to subcontract their jobs, a victory that led to a one-year

ban on subcontracting throughout the UC system. In the course of these struggles, member-activists sign up their colleagues to be full-fledged members.

Union membership at UC has more than doubled since the beginning of the year, creating a stronger unit that can speak with a louder voice at the bargaining table.

### Talking union one-on-one

Members of Boilermakers Local S-14, who are spearheading an internal organizing drive based on a voter registration campaign at several manufacturing plants in Lewisburg, Tenn., also seek to build strength as contract negotiations grow closer. Local S-14 member Helen Hannah, a machine operator at the Carrier International Comfort Products plant in Lewisburg, has seen her union fight for safety and health improvements and calls her union contract "my other Bible"—but recognizes that union strength depends upon numbers.

plant doing something," says Smith. Just this summer, Local S-14's efforts have resulted in 425 new voters and 200 new members, and the program is under way at several other plants in Tennessee. The Boilermakers first sought training from national AFL-CIO field staff for local coordinators, who in turn identified and planned the project and mapped the worksites. In the case of Carrier, the plant sprawls over 28 acres and employs three shifts. "You must be disciplined and methodical," says Smith. "Identifying 2,000 workers in a plant is a lot of work."

The coordinators recruited workplace leaders such as Hannah and set up a network of canvass organizers, who each oversee 10 canvassers. In turn, each canvasser is responsible for reaching out to

"It took dedicated officers and stewards to do things like figure out where to store 6,000 cans of soda pop," Nicholson says. The workers who came to the union's lunch-and-learn heard from local and national officers who discussed the advantages of joining AFGE. They also heard



EDDIE WHITEFIELD

**Strategizing:** Helen Hannah (far right) and other organizers at Boilermakers Local S-14 in Tennessee discuss plans for contacting their co-workers.

# strengthening the union's voice in the workplace

"We are growing, and that size means strength," Hannah says. "The company can see the growth and says to itself, 'We have to listen to what they have to say.'"

Hannah is a canvasser for the union's "talking union one-on-one" program. When Othal Smith, a Boilermakers International vice president, saw how effective Boilermakers' locals with 100 percent membership were, he kicked off the "talking union" program so all the locals could harness the full strength of the workers' collective voice.

"At the locals with 100 percent membership, I saw that it causes management to respect the union more," Smith says. As program coordinator Eddie Whitefield puts it, "If you open a checking account and you only have the initial amount, it doesn't grow much. But if you keep adding to it, the account grows. We have a better chance to negotiate a good agreement if we have 95 percent membership."

"Talking union" begins with a pro-working family action—for Boilermakers Local S-14 this year, that means voter registration and a get-out-the-vote drive—that ultimately leads to recruiting members. "It gets people used to seeing the union in the

up to 10 workers. "The program has given me the chance to talk to people about voting," says Hannah. The bottom line, says Smith, is "You learn to talk to people about something you have in common and you don't quit."

### Lunch, learn and organize

That same sense of common purpose is what activists at AFGE Local 1438 get across with their "lunch-and-learn" initiative, which attracted 1,200 new members during a two-week spring drive.

"We tell people, 'We are workers here just like you are, and we are your voice,'" says Donna Nicholson, president of the local, which represents workers at the U.S. Census Bureau in Jeffersonville, Ind. The membership drive is part of a national program that brings in 30,000 new members a year. "Most federal workers get a 30-minute lunch break, so it was worth our while to invest in some pizza and invite folks to learn more about our union's efforts on Capitol Hill," says Sharon Pinnock, director of AFGE's membership department. "Lunch-and-learn is the cornerstone of our recruitment strategy."

about the benefits the union had negotiated in their contract, such as alternative work schedules. The contract expires this fall.

Ted Spotts, who digitizes maps in the bureau's geography division, joined the union after eating sandwiches and cookies at a recent lunch-and-learn session.

"I found out what the union was all about, how it gives us a voice, how it helps us speak out as individuals and as a whole," says Spotts. "I always talk up the union and talk up benefits such as dental and medical insurance. I'm proud to be in a union."

Lunch-and-learn already has increased union activity, Nicholson says. "Now there is more awareness of why we're here. People are talking about us in a positive way, and there's better attendance at union meetings." Nicholson is looking ahead to the benefits increased membership and a more powerful union will bring as the internal organizing campaign lays the groundwork for AFGE Local 1438 members to have a more effective voice at the bargaining table.

"I hope the long-term effect will be us having more clout," says Nicholson. @

# UNION ACTION ON A GLOBAL SCALE

**A year after union members and their allies rallied in Seattle, thousands of union activists are carrying on the momentum to educate and mobilize communities to seek a global economy that works for working families**

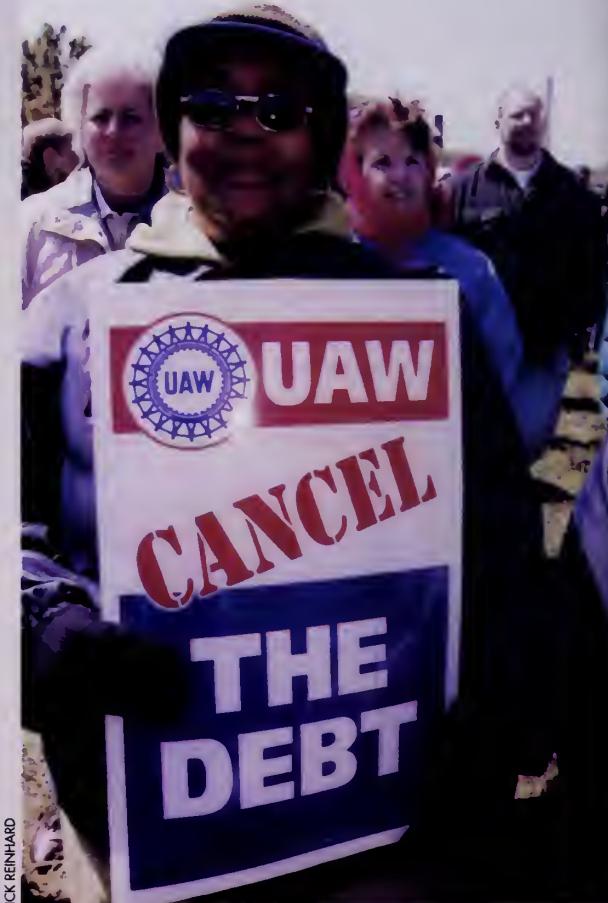
BY JAMES B. PARKS

**W**HEN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF union members, environmentalists and religious activists marched last November in Seattle against the policies of the World Trade Organization, they ignited a new energy inside the union movement, among communities and throughout the world—and jump-started the process of altering the way global economic policy is made.

As working people and their allies build strength around global issues, policy makers have begun to take notice of their message: If the global economy doesn't work for working families, it doesn't work. In April, more than 30,000 people continued to spread that message by protesting in Washington, D.C., against policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that strangle the economies of developing nations and force millions into poverty. Again in September, thousands of union members and community groups in the United States and Europe rallied in local communities and in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, where the World Bank and IMF were holding a joint meeting.

The protesters' message is resonating with people in all walks of life as workers feel the impact of globalization in every corner of the world. The World Bank recently released its *World Development Report 2000/2001*, which calls for "empowering" poor people, and the Clinton administration is calling for making workers' rights and environmental protection part of the rules of the WTO. The recent trade agreement with Jordan marked the first time the United States

and a trading partner have agreed to enforceable protections for workers' rights in the core of a trade agreement. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says these actions represent a growing consensus that "globalization must be reshaped to reflect



**Global action:** More than 30,000 union and community members joined together in an April protest in Washington, D.C., seeking to change the way global policy is made.



**Acting globally and locally:** On Sept. 26, activists protested the policies of the World Bank and the IMF in Prague, the Czech Republic, where the two institutions were meeting (left) and in local actions around the United States, including a Columbus, Ohio, demonstration against sweatshop labor (right).

broader values than simply the freedom of capital and the rights of corporations." But that is not enough, Sweeney says. "We need enforcement of the existing global consensus on core worker rights—no child labor or forced labor, freedom from discrimination and the right to organize and bargain collectively."

The World Bank estimates 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 a day, while one-third of the world's labor force is unemployed or underemployed and 250 million children are working (see Toolbox, page 21).

"Workers came to Seattle because we are all connected in one way or another to the global economy," says Verleen Wilder, Union Cities organizer for the King County (Wash.) Labor Council. "If we don't take it upon ourselves to stop this march of unrestrained corporate greed, it's going to run over all of us. It lowers our living standards, destroys our air and water and robs us of our dignity."

Julian Bond, professor of history at American University in Washington, D.C., and national chairman of the NAACP, describes the world as it would look if it were a village of only 100 people. "Keeping all existing ratios the same," Bond says, "that village would look like this: There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere—north and south—and 22 Africans; 52 would be female; 70 would be

nonwhite and 30 white; 70 would be non-Christian and 30 would be Christian.

"Six of the 100 people would own 59 percent of all the wealth in the world, and all six of those people would be from the United States. Eighty of the 100 people would live in substandard housing. Seventy would be unable to read and write. Fifty would suffer from malnutrition. One would have a college education," Bond says.

To build on the lessons learned during the Seattle demonstrations, the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions launched a Global Fairness campaign to educate union members about the importance of international solidarity and build strong partnerships with unions in other countries to take on global companies. The campaign also aims to deepen coalitions with grassroots organizations to pressure international financial and political institutions to change global economic policies and build strength to counteract corporate power.

Thousands of union activists have begun to work to create a strong, lasting force that will educate and mobilize communities to seek a just global economy.

### **Educating members**

Since the global actions in Washington, D.C., in April, nearly 30 state federations, local unions and constituency groups have sponsored workshops on the global economy with

materials produced by the AFL-CIO's Education Department. The sessions included discussions on how the global economy affects workers' daily lives, the new realities in the global economy, the global corporate agenda and international union solidarity.

Recognizing that millions of workers in the global economy are systematically denied their core rights to join a union, bargain collectively and be free of discrimination, forced labor and child labor, the International Labor Organization in June called for the posting of its declaration of workers' rights in every workplace in its 175 member countries. Working with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, international trade secretariats and national unions in countries around the world, the AFL-CIO called on the ILO to launch a worldwide campaign to "Post the Declaration."

"We must hold corporations and governments accountable to their commitment at the ILO and make the declaration a reality for workers by publicizing, popularizing and posting the declaration in every workplace, government building and trade union hall around the world," the AFL-CIO Executive Council said in an Aug. 2 statement.

"It is critically important that rank-and-file members learn the implications of the global economy," says Bernard Brommer, president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, which held a global economy workshop at its convention in late August. "We need to understand the dynamics, who the winners and losers are, and how we can get in there and make our voices heard. If we don't get involved and join together, we're going to have a lot more problems down the road."

# ACTION STEPS

Your union or organization can join the struggle for global fairness. For several examples of activities, check out [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy).

- Visit the AFL-CIO website for a bibliography of recommended readings on global fairness compiled by the AFL-CIO Education Department, [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/global\\_readings.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/global_readings.htm).
- Get involved in local efforts to raise awareness of global fairness issues. For more information on local actions, contact your central labor council or international union or visit the Jobs with Justice website at [www.jwj.org](http://www.jwj.org).
- Start an anti-sweatshop group. For details, visit the National Labor Committee website, [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org), or the United Students Against Sweatshops site, [www.usasnet.org](http://www.usasnet.org). ☐

Unions and central labor councils are getting set to take the next step in the education effort, training local union activists to teach other members about the global economy. The King County Labor Council will hold the first such train-the-trainer session in Seattle early next year.

## Building solidarity across borders

More and more unionized companies in the United States are based in Europe or Asia, as global companies move capital and resources across political boundaries, seeking the highest profits, the lowest labor costs and the fewest environmental restrictions. To combat these international profiteers, unions are beginning to reach out to fellow trade unionists in other countries for solidarity and to develop joint strategies for organizing and bargaining.

International solidarity played a significant role in bringing the contract talks between the 14 unions in the Coordinated Bargaining Committee and General Electric this summer to a successful conclusion, says Douglas Meyer, research and public policy director for IUE-CWA Industrial Division. In 1998, the unions at GE plants began an international exchange program to foster understanding and build solidarity among workers, Meyer says. During the Seattle protests, the GE unions spotlighted the company's practice of moving jobs overseas in search of low wages and few environmental restrictions.

Working with the International Metalworkers Federation, the CBC convened a GE World Council in Washington, D.C., in March with 150 delegates from 20 countries, who pledged to support the CBC unions and set up a structure for future efforts in organizing and collective bargaining. In the final days before the contract expired June 25, GE union members took part in an International Solidarity Day to support bargaining talks around the world—with GE workers in Istanbul, Turkey, wearing T-shirts with the CBC slogan, "GEt Up, Stand Up for Secure Jobs," Meyer says.

## Developing coalitions

Unions are continuing to reach out to communities and are expanding their alliances to include coalitions with religious, environmental and human rights activists to pressure international financial and political institutions to change global economic policies.

Local coalitions also are budding, as unions and activists begin to link the inequities of the global economy with workers' struggles in their communities. In April, as part of the World Bank protests, the AFL-CIO and Jubilee 2000, a global, faith-based movement, drew attention to the need for debt relief for developing countries that cannot meet their citizens' basic needs. During the September mobilization, activists in some 50 U.S. cities marched and rallied in support of organiz-

ing and collective bargaining campaigns. In Seattle, Jobs with Justice and Jubilee 2000 Seattle held a Workers' Rights Board hearing on the right to organize at Starbucks, following the successful efforts by coffee bean roasters to join the Operating Engineers. In Washington, D.C., Parking Lot Attendants Local 27, which is affiliated with the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees, defended the rights of parking lot attendants to choose a voice at InterPark. In Columbus, Ohio, United Students Against Sweatshops joined Steelworkers and the human rights advocacy group the National Labor Committee to demand that Kohl's Department Stores stop abuses of workers' rights by its subcontractor at the Chentex sweatshop in Nicaragua. In Milwaukee and Lexington, Ky., union members and former Nicaraguan sweatshop workers took the same message to Kohl's stores.

The key to balancing the power of corporations and ensuring the vitality of free societies lies in empowering workers around the world, says Sweeney. The right of workers to choose a union is accepted as a universal principle by the United Nations and the ILO, but it is widely opposed by tyrannical governments and some multinational companies. To correct the imbalance of power, "we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that universally recognized core worker rights be built into the rules of the global market," Sweeney says.

In the year since Seattle, the union movement has made a start in making the global economy work for working families, but union activists acknowledge there is much work ahead. "What happens in the global arena directly affects workers in every country. It determines the products we buy, the jobs we gain or lose, the markets where our products are sold, the standard of living we enjoy," says Milwaukee County Labor Council President John Goldstein. "The next step is to build on our successes by creating a stronger union movement. Then we will be able to gain the power to gain a seat for workers, environmentalists, consumers and developing nations at the table when decisions are made and trade deals cut."

To Wilder, it is even more basic. "This is a struggle for our freedom and the upholding of our basic values as working people. If we lose this fight, we lose everything." ☐

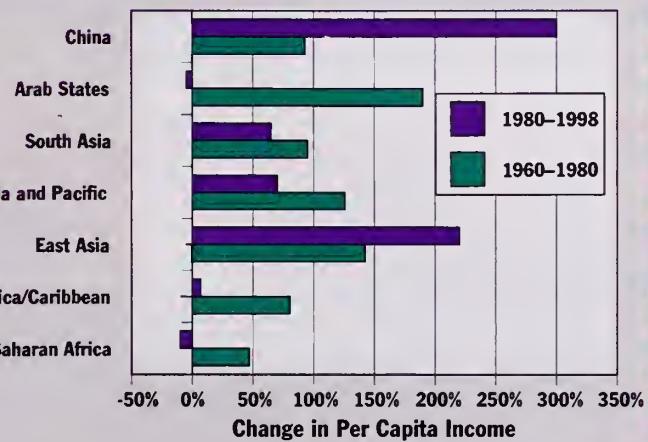
# GLOBAL Injustice

Global economic policies, driven by corporate greed, are not working for the world's workers. The programs promoted and sometimes imposed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization have created a bonanza for Big Business—but have left workers behind. As development increases, workers have seen their incomes dwindle or remain stagnant. At the same time, the number of people living in abject poverty has risen over the past decade, and so has the percentage of unemployed in almost every region. The rate of growth in most developing countries has slowed, if not stopped.



## As Development Increases, Income Decreases

### Change in per capita income in the developing world: 1960–1980 vs. 1980–1998



After adopting the economic policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, every region of the developing world, except China and East Asia, has seen its rate of growth slow down dramatically in the past two decades. East Asia's growth is due solely to the quadrupling of China's GDP, which is driven by oppressive state control and forced labor.

Source: *United Nations Human Development Reports 1998, 2000*. 22

## Most of the World Is Poor

### Number of people living on less than \$2 a day (billions)

1987	1990	1993	1996	1998 (est.)
2.50	2.72	2.78	2.72	2.80



More than half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day, which buys about one pound of food per person per day.

Source: *World Bank*

## Rising Unemployment Despite a Globalized Economy

### Percentage of workforce unemployed

	1990	1995	1997
Africa	N/A	14.2	N/A
Western Europe	6.6	8.7	9.8
Eastern Europe (including Russia)	1.3	8.7	8.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	5.7	7.5	7.8
South America	5.6	7.8	8.7
Southeast Asia*	3.0	3.1	3.8

\*Includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand

Unemployment rates have risen in most parts of the world over the past 10 years—belying the myth that globalization creates jobs.

Source: *International Labor Organization*

## Twinkie, Twinkie, Little Star

More than the sweet dream of a wide-eyed child, Hostess Twinkies have satisfied generations of children and adults from the Great Depression to the 21st century, becoming an all-American—and all union—icon along the way. Now, the golden cake with the vanilla-creme filling turns 70—and union members marked the milestone by baking the world's largest Twinkie birthday cake in honor of the gooey snack.

For more than 40 years, members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 1 in Chicago have put food on their families' tables by making Twinkies. As part of a Twinkie birthday celebration, union members baked a Twinkie-lover's dream—a giant cake standing 25 feet high and containing 20,000 Twinkies, which soon were consumed by the onlookers at the Navy Pier.

Invented in 1930 by bakery manager Jimmy Dewar, the golden snack cake was named after a billboard advertisement for Twinkle Toe Shoes. Today, Hostess produces more than 500 million Twinkies a year. Recognizing how much a part of the American palate Twinkies have become, the White House Millennium Council last year selected Twinkies as one of the items to be preserved in the nation's millennium time capsule, representing "an object of enduring American symbolism." ☐



Twinkie attack: Snack lovers celebrate the 70th birthday of the "Twinkie" with a 25-foot birthday cake containing 20,000 of the confection.

PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERSTATE BRANDS CORP



CEDAR POINT PHOTO

**I**t is the ultimate extreme experience for roller coaster junkies—the Millennium Force, the world's tallest roller coaster.

Thousands of coaster enthusiasts have boarded the monster ride, which opened this year at Cedar Point Amusement Park and Resort near Sandusky, Ohio. But few knew the ride bears a union label. It took a crew of 120 union workers nearly seven months to build the ride. Members of the Iron Workers, Operating Engineers, Carpenters and Laborers worked through the blazing sun of August all the way through the frigid Lake Erie winds of February to build the Millennium Force roller coaster.

The Iron Workers erected the 310-foot-tall coaster, which has 6,995 feet of steel track. Operating Engineers ran the cranes that lifted the 11,000- to 17,000-pound track sections, while the Carpenters and LIUNA members dug footers and poured the concrete. The biggest footer was 56 feet by 56 feet and five feet deep.

The coaster, which opened this summer after extensive testing, propels riders along at speeds up to 92 miles per hour, with one drop of more than 300 feet at a nearly straight-down, 80-degree angle.

Makes you glad it's got a union label. ☐

## Signs Along the Way



Button up: Some signs of the times as political activists brought humor into the tense 2000 election campaign.

## WEBSIGHTINGS



[www.dmamusic.org/dmastore](http://www.dmamusic.org/dmastore)—The Denver Musicians Association, Local 20-623 of the Musicians Union, has created an online music store that ensures most of the proceeds go to the musicians who created the products. Items include CDs and tapes—featuring such titles as “Exit Sliding” by the Buddy Baker Jazz Quintet and “This Is Me” by Sunny Waters—sheet music, books, musical instrument accessories, T-shirts and posters. @

[www.cdc.gov/niosh/elcosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/elcosh)—The Electronic Library of Construction Occupational Safety and Health, developed by the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department’s Center to Protect Workers’ Rights, enables users to locate health and safety information under such categories as Trade, Hazard and Job Site. Some material is available in Spanish and Italian. Under Training Programs for Safety and Health, users can search for training materials, topics or requirements.

**Rights, Not Roses: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945–80**, by Dennis A. Deslippe, discusses the links between union women and the feminist movement. Although educated, white-collar women were the “visible face” of feminism, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, Deslippe says union working-class women forcefully pressed for gender equality, helping place it on the national agenda, and supported passage of new laws covering women in the workplace. He examines case studies of unions representing packinghouse and electrical workers to detail the ways in which union leaders dealt with these demands for change. He also looks at the different strategies of such groups as the National Organization for Women and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. \$21.95 paperback, \$49.95 cloth. University of Illinois Press. For more information, visit the website at [www.press.uillinois.edu](http://www.press.uillinois.edu). @

An extensive list of safety and health links also is provided.

[www.brightpathvideo.com/Labor\\_Video/labor\\_video.html](http://www.brightpathvideo.com/Labor_Video/labor_video.html)—This site features streaming video of labor struggles around the world. Using RealPlayer or similar software at 56K speed, visitors can view videos, such as “Local 2 Marriott Workers,” a 13-minute video about the nine-year struggle of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 2 in San Francisco to win a first contract for Marriott Corp. employees. Also available is “Labor Battles the WTO,” a 37-minute documentary about the protests last year in Seattle. @

## GUIDE

**Stop Sweatshops: An Education/Action Kit**. Through an interactive presentation and workshop format, the kit includes a step-by-step guide to corporate research, action tools on organizing a sweatshop fashion show, worker profiles, essentials of codes of conduct and independent monitoring. Kits are \$12.50 each, including postage and handling; a 40 percent discount for orders of 50 or more kits is available. To order, send a check payable to Maquila Solidarity Network, 606 Shaw St., Toronto, Ontario, M6G 3L6. For more information, call 416-532-8584; e-mail [info@maquilasolidarity.org](mailto:info@maquilasolidarity.org); or visit the network’s website at [www.maquilasolidarity.org](http://www.maquilasolidarity.org). @

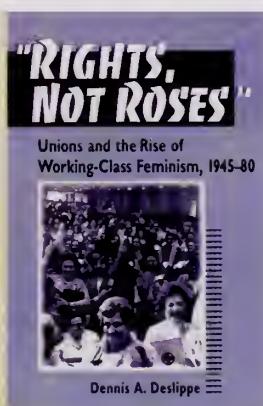
## FILM

“*Trade Off*,” an award-winning film documenting the November 1999 actions for global fairness, is screening in major cities to mark the first anniversary of the “Battle in Seattle.” Through actual footage of rallies and street actions by the activists, organizers, union leaders and policy experts

whose efforts raised awareness about the impact of World Trade Organization policies, the film highlights the impact of global trade policies on the environment, health, food, human rights and democracy around the world. “*Trade Off*” will be screened in Las Vegas, Nov. 29; Washington, D.C., Nov. 30; New York City and Seattle, Dec. 1–7; and Los Angeles, Dec. 9–10 and 16–17. Check local listings for times and locations or visit the website, [www.wrightanglemedia.com](http://www.wrightanglemedia.com), and click on “Screening Dates.” @

## REPORT

**Work Without Justice: Low Wage Immigrant Laborers** is one in a series of reports about at-risk immigrants produced by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. This report tracks immigrant laborers from their countries of origin on often perilous journeys to the United States, and documents the harsh conditions immigrants—especially those smuggled by organized crime syndicates—find after they arrive in this country. Twenty-five case studies focus on day laborers, service-sector employees, migrant farm workers and immigrants in the meat packing and poultry industries. \$10. Send check or money order to CLINIC, McCormick Pavilion, 415 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017, Attn: At-Risk Reports. For more information, phone 202-635-2556; to download an order form, visit [www.cliniclegal.org/publications.htm](http://www.cliniclegal.org/publications.htm). @



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